



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



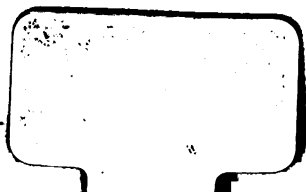
18

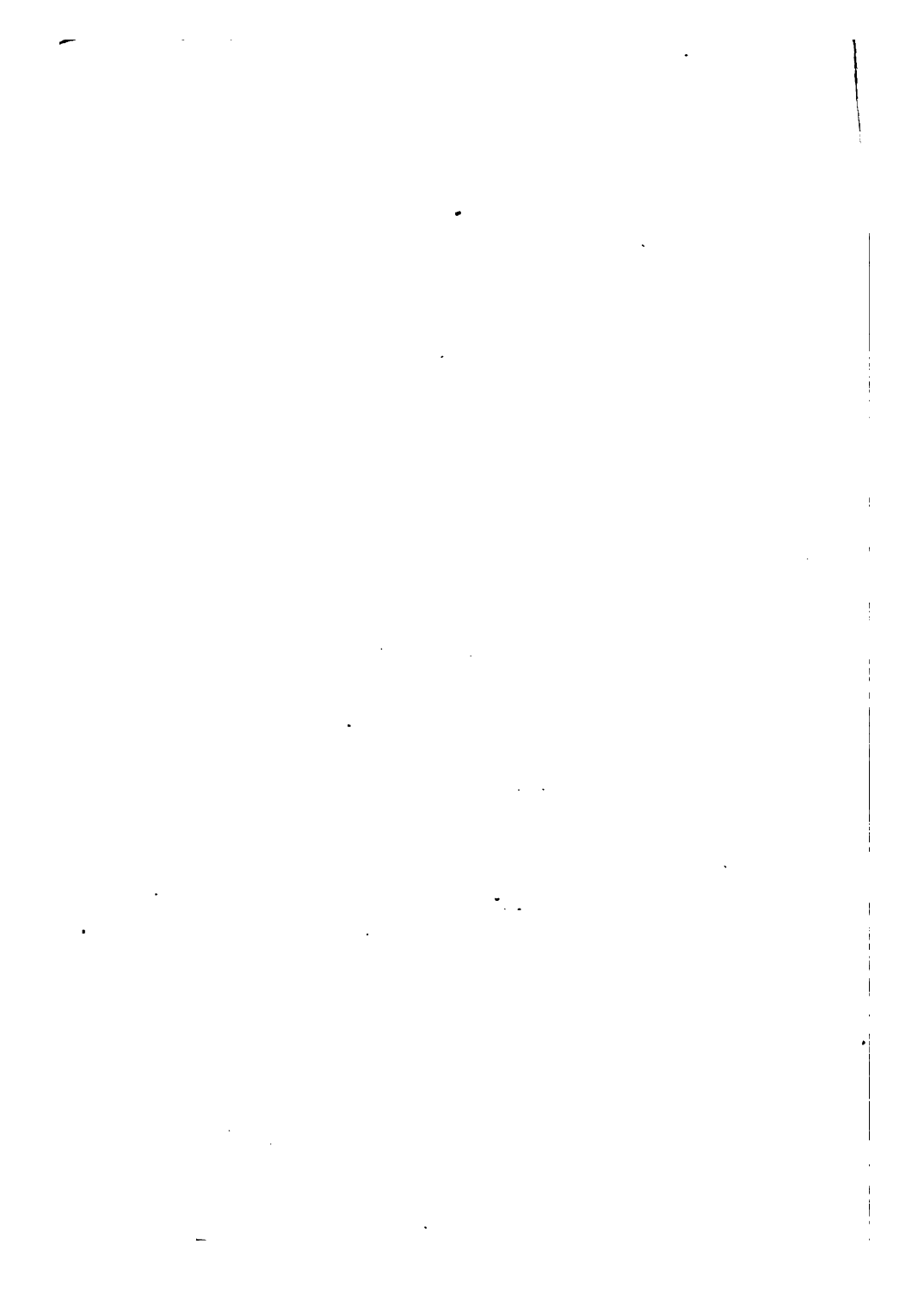


19



600078920W





THEY WERE NEIGHBOURS.

A Fable.

BY

LAINDON HILL.

"Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,
And sets the tongue—might lie so long at rest—
Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!
Why should I doubt he will explain in time
What I feel now, but fail to find the words?"

It seems absurd, impossible to-day;
So seems so much else not explained but known,
So, let him wait God's instant men call years;
Do out the duty! Through such souls alone,
God stooping shows sufficient of his light
For us i' the dark to rise by."

THE RING AND THE BOOK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

London:

SAMUEL TINSLEY & CO.,
10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1878.

[All Rights Reserved.]

251. e. 471.



CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. STRAWBERRIES AT THE VICARAGE - - -	1
II. TRUE PHILOSOPHY - - - - -	22
III. POLLING DAY AT SHEREDALE - - - -	40
IV. THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE - - - -	60
V. A GARDEN-PARTY - - - - -	79
VI. AFTER THE PARTY - - - - -	96
VII. IS IT TRUE? - - - - -	120
VIII. A SUMMER NIGHT'S RIDE - - - -	144
IX. AT INTERLACHEN - - - - -	162
X. THE ASCENT OF THE WENGERN - - - -	183
XI. A THUNDER-STORM - - - - -	204
XII. POLITICAL EDUCATION - - - - -	225
XIII. NEWS FROM HOME - - - - -	247
XIV. MOUND CASTLE - - - - -	266

THEY WERE NEIGHBOURS.

CHAPTER I.

STRAWBERRIES AT THE VICARAGE.

LUCY CARLYLE returned home the next day. When she heard how many people were expected the ensuing evening, her equanimity was considerably disturbed; she thought her brother had somewhat taken leave of his usual good sense, and she wondered not a little what had induced him to such an extraordinary step.

When old Mary heard about it she stood perfectly silent for at least half a minute, and then without uttering a single word turned round and went back into the kitchen. In a few minutes she returned, and in a hard high voice said:

“And pray, Miss Lucy, what are you going to give to all these fine folk?”

“What is usual, I suppose. You will know

better than me," replied Lucy, hoping to mollify her.

"Usual! it's usual to have forks, and knives, and spoons, and china that's not broken," was the disdainful reply.

"But, Mary, we are not going to give a dinner."

"Mayhap not, or *I* should leave the house, but you are going to entertain, and I suppose you and the master don't mind those who'll come peering and sneering.

"Oh, Mary! things are not so bad as that," said poor Lucy, really now alarmed at what might happen, if the factotum was to continue in this mood. "It is not so very many who are coming, and I will do everything I can to help you."

"Much good you'll be. I must have some one with big hands for that, who has been brought up to it. Your puny little bits may make the nosegays, if you will; so just you go down to Susan Wood, she's likelier far than you, and tell her to come up quick."

"I will go at once," said Lucy, meekly, and went to put on her hat, while Mary, still grumbling in an undertone, retreated towards the kitchen, making a stand at the door, and calling out in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the house:

"You'll not get any dinner to-day, miss, so you needn't expect it, and you can just tell your brother so."

Then the kitchen-door was shut with a loud bang.

It was a relief to Lucy to find herself outside of the house, and she felt very much inclined, after securing the services of Susan Wood, to go up to Moorton Manor and spend the rest of the day there, but loyalty to her brother would not allow of this, so she returned slowly home, taking good care that Susan should have time to arrive before she did.

The rest of the day she busied herself in making the garden as neat as the time left allowed, reserving until the next day the more difficult process of arranging the drawing-room ; and wondering whether the muslin curtains would pass muster, or ought to be replaced by others, which she believed to be still unwashed.

Mary did not show her face again the whole day, but sent them up a dinner rather better than usual, and when Lucy retired for the night, she consoled herself as regards the events of the next day, by reflecting that she had only to live through another twenty-four hours, when all her present difficulties would be ended.

About five o'clock the next morning, Lucy

was awoke out of a sound sleep by an unusual stir in the house, but, being young, she only turned round, and was soon again asleep. When, at a later hour, she entered the drawing-room, she held her breath for a minute with surprise and amusement. Not only were the clean muslin curtains up, but there were clean chintz covers over all the furniture. Not a thread was to be seen on the carpet, and Mary had made some small changes in the arrangement of the furniture, which greatly improved the general air of the room.

Lucy was so delighted that she ran into the kitchen at once to praise and thank Mary, but she found no one there. Mary had heard her coming, and disappeared, so Lucy could only return and rejoice with her brother over the appearance of everything.

"It is indeed nice," said the Vicar; "and when you have made your nosegays I shall not mind any one's 'peering and sneering.'"

Lucy laughed.

"But, Tom, what do you think she will give them to eat? Do you really think I may leave everything to her?"

"I should," said the Vicar; "she can do perfectly well if she chooses—and apparently she does choose."

"But, Tom, dear—the worst is, how can we amuse the people? And I don't understand your inviting Mr. Wymerly; I thought you disapproved of him?"

The Vicar, seeing her so much disturbed, thought it better to tell her how the party had originated. In this he was wise. It took an immense weight off her spirits, and left her ready to amuse and be amused by anything that might turn up.

While all this was going on at the Vicarage, an interview was taking place at the neighbouring town of Sheredale, which was destined to have an important effect upon the result of the election.

The night when John Rodgers left Susan Wood in such haste, he had not slackened speed for a good half-hour, during all which time he had had the road all to himself. It was too early for even the first twitterings of the birds, and no human being seemed stirring but himself.

The continued quiet served greatly to restore a feeling of security, until at last he stopped suddenly, and, with a "Dang it! I've had enuff of this!" threw himself down on the bank for a minute's rest, and time to draw a longer breath. Taking off his hat, and wiping his hot

head, he was replacing the handkerchief with which he had done so, in the inside of the hat, when he thought he saw something moving on the other side of the hedge opposite to him; and the next minute a shabby, disreputable-looking man jumped over and came straight up to him.

"Hulloa!" said John. "Who are you?"

"Don't you know me? I'm too well dressed, 's'pose; but I've been waiting a long while for you. I know'd you'd join us, sooner nor later, John."

John looked hard at the man without the least recognising him, the man all the time looking equally hard at him. At last he removed a dirty beard and moustache, which had given him very much the appearance of an old Jew, upon which John started up in terror, exclaiming, "Why, you're a pleceman!"

"Was, John," returned the other; "but I was too 'cute for them; they was forced to do without me; did my work only too well, and the others couldn't stand it."

"Why, what did you do?"

"That's my consarn, not yours. I left the force."

"And what are you doing now?"

"Earning an honest living."

"As how?"

"Well, there's a deal of game round here, and I mostly lives on that, and what I gets by selling the rest to respectable tradespeople who employs me to serve them." Here the man grinned.

"It don't seem to pay," said John, after a minute's pause.

"You don't like my appearance?—'tis a pity; we feed well, and can sleep the whole day. You're in difficulties; I've seen that for some time. You'd better throw your luck in wi' us."

"Oh!" thought John; "suppose this man saw me the night after the fire, and is trying it on." So he said, "I'm on my way to get work at Sheredale; if I don't succeed——"

"Why should you try? You'd better join us."

"Well, I don't mind work when it's well paid. I think I'll try that first."

"Then you won't come?"

"Well, you see, I must grow my beard first," said John with a faint attempt at a joke.

"No need for that, as I've shown you. You'll not say you've seen me?"

"No, no, all right; but I think I'll go on now."

The other man took the hint, and returned the same way he came, while John proceeded at a more leisurely pace, but without stopping again, until he approached the county town.

As soon as the day was sufficiently advanced he went to two or three places in the town, where he had at times done odd jobs; and at the last he entered, the master was only too glad to secure so good a hand. He had received an order for a good deal of deal of hoarding to be erected for the different polling places at the ensuing election; his own regular workmen were fully engaged, so John got work at once. He worked hard, and continued quite sober for a whole week, the memory of Susan was strong within him. He really wished to marry her and settle comfortably, but bad habits once entertained are not so easily laid aside.

When at the end of the week he received his pay, he for the first time since entering the town, went to a public-house. Who should he meet there but Mr. Magog, who greeted him as an old comrade, and asked him to join him in a pot of beer.

John, nothing loth, went with him into the parlour of the inn, where he and Mr. Magog sat down, and the latter began: "You're just the kind of man I want, John." (John thought he was wanted by a variety of persons). "It's the intelligent artisan who must help on the white slaves of England."

"And who may they be?" asked John, with

considerable surprise. "I thought only darkies were slaves."

"Don't you call it slavery not to be able to get your own price for your own work?" said Mr. Magog with solemnity.

"Well, I never had no difficulty about that," said John, wincing at the recollection of the good job he had refused.

"You, perhaps not, but those do who do not work as well as you can."

"I shouldn't think Tom Smith could ever make as much as I can," said John, with considerable pride: "he's so slow."

"But is that fair? If a man does his best, he should be paid the same as any other man, shouldn't he?"

"I dunno about that," said John. "Best workmen always get the best price."

"But is that Christian?"

"Christian!" said John, with a long whistle. "I don't see what we've to do with that on week days. Why, what would be the use of being a good workman, unless you were better paid?"

"That's not justice," said Mr. Magog. "What the English workmen want is—'Equal pay for all.'"

"What! that I shouldn't get no more than Tom Smith?"

"No, not that; a far better plan, that Tom Smith should get as much as you."

John grinned: "And how'll you get the masters to pay?"

"They're rich, they can do it easily; they must be taught it is their duty, and we have to teach it them."

"I guess they'll be slow enough in learning it, then."

Without taking any notice of this reply, Mr. Magog proceeded:

"And the land; shouldn't you like a bit of land?"

"Well, I'm not much of a hand wi' a spade."

"Have you no thought for others? Are the agricultural labourers to starve on a miserable pittance, without even a bit of land to eke it out, and nobody to help them to anything better?"

"Nobody's ever helped me. I've alus had to make my own way—haven't you?"

"No," replied Mr. Magog, with dignity. "I've been supported because I've worked for others. It's far better to work for others, than for yourself, John. I wonder you do not see it."

"Well, if you're supported all the time, it may be."

"How could I do the work unless I was

supported? Do you think I would live on charity?"

All the time this conversation was going on, Mr. Magog took care that when one pot of beer was emptied another one replaced it. This was a rare treat for John after his week's abstinence, he took to it as kindly as a kitten does to milk, and consequently was gradually becoming less and less clear-headed. Mr. Magog drank little himself, he wanted to make use of John, and continued to sit on. He asked next, "Who may this Tom be you mentioned?"

"Oh, my mate, where I'm at work; he's a darned bad hand, he is; as how is he to get what I do?"

"I told you before, when I was with you at Nunneley, it must be done by combination. If all you fellows agree only to work for what you all can live upon, don't you see the masters must give it you?"

"But suppose they won't?"

"They must; they can't do without you. Here I've been round about in all the villages finding out what the men get. Why it's just starvation price; and no land, except where old Carlyle lives. Though he's on the wrong side, he treats his people better than that new fellow, Wymerly, who thinks he can teach an old hand

like me. I guess I'll teach him a thing or two yet. Now, John, mark my words. The old cove must be brought in. He's promised to give a tidy bit of land to any one who asks for it, and there are many who would ask if they knew of it. To-morrow's the first polling day. Break off work, you and Tom both of you, and when you see the lads coming in from the country just you bring them here to me, and I'll make it all clear to them. One of you had better remain on the look out, and t'other one show them the way here, or if there are too many, tell them to come on to the White Cat public; that's where we're now."

"I can't lose a day's pay."

"I should think not. You shall have two days' pay and a half, and Tom shall have two days, and both of you as much beer as you like."

"It wouldn't do for Tom to have as much as me."

"No, John; we'll wait a bit for that. But mind, t'other party will be on the look-out too, and you mustn't get fuddled, or it'll be no good."

Here Mr. Magog rose to depart, and as he did so he put five shillings into John's hand, saying, "Give this to Tom," which was another half-crown. Thus fortified, John left, with the very

best intentions of helping the progress of the labourers. Equally well satisfied with himself, Mr. Magog returned to a cheap lodging-house on the outskirts of the town.

The small drawing-room at the Vicarage opened into a still smaller room, which was used as a dining-room. When Lucy came downstairs in the evening, dressed in a simply-made white muslin, with a blue sash round her waist, and her masses of hair the only ornament of her head, she found the tea-table ready set in the little room, and as prettily and daintily appointed as could be. It only wanted the lovely nosegay she forthwith put in the centre in order to be perfectly complete. It was with a feeling of satisfaction, almost of pride, that she awaited the arrival of her guests.

Not so the Vicar. He had been terribly jarred by the dinner at Mr. Wymerly's house, even more so after it was over, in recalling what had passed, than he had been at the time; and now he was about to receive into his own house, as guests, the very people whose thoughts and speech were simply abhorrent to him. Added to this, was a degree of excitement and anxiety in the prospect of Cecilia's presence in his house, of which he was perfectly well aware, and felt both provoked and ashamed.

Alas for poor human nature ! Here was he, the one person on whom the onus rested of stemming the progress of error and disseminating truth, made irritable and anxious by the anticipated presence of the woman whom of all others he admired, and by having to stand face to face with some of those unhappy beings who had lost the safe path where he was permitted to tread. How could such a weak vessel as he was look down upon any one ? What was the power of religion, if it could not help him just in the very difficulties which were before him ? Merely to show displeasure, or make a bluster of indignation, might be a relief to himself, but that was not the way to treat educated men. He knew perfectly well that such a course would close every possible opening of better things to them. Besides, he shrunk from it ; his own nature was too humble ; he felt a great respect for Mr. Trevor, and Staunton was an old friend to whom he had long been accustomed to look up as one of the really clever men at the University. It was impossible to influence such men without some valid proofs. And if they gave up Revelation, what was to be done ? The longer he thought, the more miserable, the more hopeless, and the more self-condemnatory the Vicar became. And to complete the bitterness

of his present state of mind, the thought rushed across him whether the Catholics might not be right as to the celibacy of the clergy. If all his strength were given to the work of his Master, with undivided attention, surely he, even he, might find out the right way. The result of all this meditation was the determination to make himself as pleasant and genial to his guests as possible, with the entire negation of personal feeling ; and by way of doing so, he joined his sister in the drawing-room, looking so pale and miserable that she longed to ask him what was the matter, but had too much discretion to do so just then.

When the great orb of daylight appears, and everything laughs into gladness and beauty, it does not make a greater change in the appearance of the earth than was visible in the countenance of Mr. Carlyle, when, glancing at the open window, he saw the garden gate open, and the party from Moorton Manor approaching the house. To step out on to the lawn, and to meet them all with unfeigned delight, was the work of an instant, and more effectually banished the Vicar's melancholy speculations, than any wisdom, however sublime, could have done.

After the first greetings were over, Lucy was requested to do the honours of her garden,

which she did, *con amore*, and while displaying her roses, carnations, and verbenas, entirely lost all thoughts of the difficulty of entertaining such unusual visitors.

After inspecting not only the flower, but the kitchen garden, they all entered the house, and Cecilia requested to see a certain coloured moon-light photograph of "The Bridge of Sighs," at Venice, which had been sent as a present to the Vicar. In order to do so, they adjourned to his study, which was the largest room in the house, where it was hanging up. This room was at the back, with a pleasant outlook on to a grass field, where the only sounds that could disturb anyone, while either writing or reading, would come from the circling rooks who had made their home in the tall elms in the hedgerow. But these birds, instead of disturbing, were like old friends to the Vicar. He knew well their time for going forth in the morning, and for returning at nightfall. He delighted in the various sounds they make. Often and often they had seemed to be answering the very thoughts of his mind, and the weary longings of his heart, and few things would have disturbed him more than if one of them had been shot. The furniture of the room was simple enough. A writing table occupied the centre, and against the walls

were ranged books, resting on common deal shelves. There was matting round the table, a rug before the fireplace, and in front of the window. One easy chair, and four small cane-bottomed ones completed the equipment of this study, with the exception of a view of Powdridge Court, which hung over the fireplace. It was flanked on either side by two miniatures, one of the late Mr. Carlyle, the other of his wife. To these had now been added the photograph Cecilia asked to see.

As she entered the room she said, "Really, Mr. Carlyle, I had no idea you indulged in such a luxurious den. I call this room perfectly charming."

The Vicar had never fully appreciated his room until now ; never before had he seen the same brightness in it. Radiant with pleasure, he pointed out the photograph they had come to see, while Miss Trevor walked up to the window, and seeing the grass covered with rooks walking over it with utmost pride and satisfaction, she said :

"So you've those horrid birds here, too? How they must annoy you! Can't you get them shot?"

"Oh, Helen," said Mr. Trevor, "I like rooks."

"Yes, papa, but then you think about the worms and other disagreeable things they eat, but I only hear their horrid noise."

"It is not only musicians who can speak out the inward emotion through harmonious discords, innumerable are the natural sounds which do the same; but to comprehend, to enter into them with appreciative sympathy, belongs to those who have lived and suffered, and possess a different organisation from that of Helen Trevor."

Mr. Carlyle heard her remark, but as there was no need to reply after Mr. Trevor had spoken, he remained quietly standing by Cecilia, who was altogether absorbed by the scene at which she was gazing, and had not yet uttered a word.

Presently she turned towards him, and said:

"I do not think I could bear to have this always hanging before me."

Their eyes met for an instant, and there was a tear in one of hers. She walked up to the window.

"I shall never pity you again, Mr. Carlyle, whatever happens to you, with such a sanctum as this."

"No, indeed, if *you* were always in it," thought

the Vicar to himself; but he said simply: "It is pleasant enough sometimes."

Lucy now summoned them again into the drawing-room, with the announcement that the two other gentlemen had arrived. In so happy a frame was the Vicar, that nothing could exceed the pleasant friendliness with which he received them. Without further delay, they all sat down to the tea-table.

Mr. Wymerly and Lucy had never yet spoken. After saying he was afraid that Mr. Staunton and he were rather late, but that it was so difficult to lead a man accustomed to his own ways and late hours, and Mr. Staunton had declared that he had only desired to come before he had been asked, but that Wymerly had kept him waiting, Mr. Wymerly said to Lucy that she must not believe all that she heard about him, and then asked her whether she had been fishing again lately? "I'm afraid you thought me very rude the other day, when I ventured to remonstrate about the prudence of your position?"

Lucy coloured up; she hoped Mr. Wymerly had forgotten all about that little encounter, but she said that she really was not in any danger, and that if he would try the plan himself, he would find it as pleasant as she did.

"Oh, but I should not know the exact *pose*; will you come and show me some day?"

"I am not going to remain here long," said Lucy, demurely.

"Will you have some strawberries?" said her brother, coming to her relief.

There was a raid now made upon these strawberries, which were super-excellent, and well deserved the praise they got, as well as the thick cream which Mary had also provided.

"Cecilia and Mrs. Trevor were as kindly sympathetic towards Lucy in her little difficulties as hostess as possible, and the rest of the meal passed as smoothly as if the table had not been surrounded by such very discordant elements. Helen, too, exerted herself to be pleasant as well as lively, and all dangerous topics were carefully avoided by the gentlemen.

When the tea was ended, they all adjourned to the garden while the table was cleared, and on re-entering the house Mr. Carlyle said, that with the permission of the assembled company, he would read aloud an MS. which had come into his hands, and which he thought might afford them some amusement.

At this announcement Mr. Staunton's face grew very long, and Mr. Wymerly felt very

much inclined to look at his watch, but he forbore ; and the ladies expressing ready acquiescence, Mr. Carlyle went to fetch the paper, while every one made themselves as comfortable as they could, scattered about the room, Mr. Staunton choosing the darkest corner where he might go to sleep in peace.

CHAPTER II.

TRUE PHILOSOPHY.

WHEN the Vicar returned, after placing himself where he could be easily heard by every one, he said :

“There is one request I must make, which is, that I am not expected to say anything more about this paper than that it was put into my hands. I have nothing to do with the authorship, nor with any of the sentiments or opinions it sets forth.”

“Hear, hear,” from Mr. Trevor.

After hearing this, both Mr. Staunton and Mr. Wymerly felt a little more curiosity as to what was coming. Without further preface, Mr. Carlyle began to read aloud :

“THE PICKED-UP NOTES.

“His class waited for him in vain. On his way to give his usual lecture, Mr. Theophilus

Lindsay, the most oblivious of philosophers, became so completely absorbed by an idea, that, hurriedly seeking the shade of a neighbouring elm-tree in order to make a few notes on the subject preoccupying him, he, utterly removed from time and space, noticed not the lengthening shadows, the final departure of daylight, nor even the hush that fell on all around, as the children who had been playing on the green gradually departed for the night.

“ At last, rising hastily, with a sigh of satisfaction, he thrust his hands, and, as he believed, the paper on which he had been writing, into his pocket.

“ If he had done so, there it would probably have remained *sine die* ; but, as not unfrequently is the case, the pockets of philosophers are not in sound condition ; and these papers, instead of stopping at their intended destination, fell to the ground and were left behind.

“ Through a curious accident, not worth detailing, they came subsequently into my possession, but I should not have ventured to make any use of them, had not Mr. Lindsay’s unfortunate disappearance, and the permission of those most nearly related to him, set me free to do as I liked with them.

“ He was evidently imagining that he was addressing his class, for the notes begin :

“ ‘ GENTLEMEN,

“ ‘ After toiling for years, amidst the accumulated masses dug out by Science from the mine of Knowledge, I trust I shall not be accused of presumption in making the assertion that I, too, have blasted an Idea which will add its mite to the wealth of Wisdom now being constantly laid before the world. In short, gentlemen, I have struck a spring of Kosmical oil which will feed the lamps of midnight students for generations yet unborn—from generation to generation reflecting over the past and the future of humanity, and explaining much that, had I been less fortunate, would lie concealed, a dark enigma.

“ ‘ It would be only half using such widely-affecting discoveries as those of the Continuity of Force, the Transformation and Equivalence of Force, and the Darwinian theory of Evolution, to confine such subtle generalisations to physical facts. No!—I will apply them also to some of the problems that weigh upon the human soul, and organisations yet undreamed-of will rank me with those who are “before their day.”

“ ‘ Is not scientific knowledge one and indivisible?—the method applicable to the *non Ego*, equally the true one for the *Ego*? Need I fear

the cavils of those who really understand the question, those whose judgment trained by a sound scholastic method, is capable of discerning the magnitude of the stake at issue, and the value of the conclusions at which I shall arrive ?

“ ‘Gentlemen, if I have to oppose knowledge to ignorance, philosophic calm to irritable prejudice, it shall be done. A similar labour has always been the lot of those who march in the van of civilisation, and I am proud to feel that even I may follow in the footsteps of the great men who have preceded me. I entreat your undivided attention to what follows.

“ ‘ If there is no fresh creation, and yet nothing perishes, we need no longer be oppressed by the fear of over population, nor yet, of becoming extinct. Protoplasm resolved into its original elements, to serve for the formation of new bodies, and that part of it which produces what we call the soul, set free to vivify another existence ; this, as thus expressed in modern phraseology, what is it but the transmigration of souls ?—that wisdom of the East, the home of the Aryan nations, and fountain source of all our knowledge—knowledge by later ages ignored or derided, now to take its proper position as ascertained fact ?

“ ‘Modern science has proved its truth. And what a wonderful relief the thought brings with it—wonderful as satisfactory to the statesman, the political economist, the poor law administrator, oppressed by the anxious consideration of the future of our country.

“ ‘Herein lies, too, the secret of extinct nations, that vexed question, hitherto so little reconcilable with some of the moral sides of humanity ; an extinct civilisation, that which *has* been of great value, raised at an unknown cost, yet apparently afterwards lost for ever ; but by this new light we perceive that the souls, once existing as Incas, or inhabiting the buried cities of Mexico, were obliged to die, as we call it, in order to be transmuted into the souls now dwelling on the earth ; otherwise there could be no progress ; the theory of Evolution requiring fresh births, as its “ mode of motion,” and the number of dwellers possible on the land being fixed by immutable law.

“ ‘Here there is an apparent difficulty, we do not conceal from ourselves that it would be impossible to verify this, to know at any one time what that number was, so as to be able to compare it with the amount at some subsequent or prior period ; but this does not need to trouble us. Were it possible to do so, and should the

numbers vary, it might be explained by the latent state, of what we call souls ; souls in the meantime *not* pervading sarcode ; the conditions not being present for the manifestation of life in matter in a concrete form.

“ ‘ Besides, otherwise it could not be a difficulty, as it belongs to the Unknowable, and must, therefore, be passed by. Science does not concern herself with that ; the theory remains equally true.

“ ‘ Again, if rightly regarded, what an unveiling of the causes which produce differences in nationalities. If the colonising power and inclination of nations were typified by that of the Anglo-Saxon, the world would want population faster than any possibility of supply, unless the duration of life were immensely shortened. But this is a simple yet exact explanation, why, the French for instance, cannot colonise ; again, too, and perhaps this is a still more striking thought, and one which may be a source of sound consolation to those benevolent members of society who would fain do away with internecine struggles. What a blessing are their constant wars, what a direct means of civilisation, of providing soul material for future development.

“ ‘ No, the French do not colonise, but their

keen sense of military glory affords the necessary supply for Anglo-Saxon civilisation.

“ ‘How different is this view from the maudlin stuff divines and moral philosophers talk about it! Science has indeed taken a mighty step when it casts such rays of light as this about its path. I will further suggest what even Mr. Darwin may thank me for—Is not this possibly the explanation of the missing concrete links needed for the completion of the exposition of his development theory? The soul-matter, *half monkey, half man*, must *disappear, become latent*, until the time and circumstances are ripe for its reappearance as *whole man*. It is a proud moment for so humble an individual as myself, when I feel I can add a thought not yet enunciated by so highly developed a monkey as Mr. Darwin.

“ ‘To turn to another subject, one greatly occupying householders, and which any day may vex the brain of highest quality—the supply of coal. *This* has struck me. If coal produces heat, may not heat produce coal? If heat is volatilised coal, is there no application of mechanical force, in the form of pressure to the heat evolved while our fires are burning, which, given the necessary time, say during the night, may resolve it back into coal, thus making the

waste of one day the supply of the next ? Let us suppose in the centre of every building there was built a large air-tight compartment, into which the heat from the various fires alight during the day was conducted, to which skilfully adapted pressure, in the form of a sinking top, might be applied during the night, so that when next day the servants desired to light the fires, they opened a door into this compartment, and found the coal already to hand, would not such a consummation indefinitely postpone the exhaustion of our coal-pits ?

“ ‘Gentlemen, I throw this out as a suggestion, and request you to consider it. We know the impossibilities of one age are the everyday occurrences of the next ; and if this could be brought within the means of our poor, it would produce results of far higher value than the mere increase of physical comfort, by entirely removing the degrading influences of charity through the use of coal tickets. The character of the masses would be raised, even as their thermal condition ; no light matter in these days, when the least educated are obtaining political power, and what to the eye of science appears the dangerous power of an ignorant majority.

“ ‘ Here again, however, if I am right, we may

be spared the fears which darken many minds ; since, as there always must be the same *quantity* (observe, I do not say *number*) of those who desire progress as of those who desire to stand still, or to retrograde, it follows that as *we* advance, the spirit which dictates " Rest and be thankful," must be in the ascendant *in some other clime* ; and is not this really going on before our very eyes ? America becoming more Torified, her best men taking less and less part in politics, standing aloof from the multitude, forming the aristocratic quantity, of which there has been too little there, and too much in this hemisphere ?

" It has appeared to some minds as if the various forms of thought succeeded one another in cycles. Gentlemen, they *must* do so ; this is no longer an appearance, but a glorious certainty, which brings with it a much needed relief from many harassing fears. We are now passing through the materialistic quarter, which produces the fashionable complaint that knowledge only destroys. That, however, is *impossible*. It has long been the pride of intellect that thought is indestructible ; if, therefore, we are to have new forms, those existing must be destroyed, or it would be vain to hope for new ones : therefore, the " Eternal No," to use

that fine expression of the great Carlyle, is the only passport towards the dwelling of the "Eternal Yea," and those who destroy each successive attempt at reaching it are our highest benefactors, our most exalted men. At the moment they destroy, at the same instant they create; the atoms of thought *must* be taking yet another form. They hover round the mountain tops of wisdom, until wafted by the airs of mathematics, and conducted by the music of the spheres, they take that shape on the human brain-plate which the exigencies of the hour demand. Gentlemen, you have seen the lovely experiment to which I allude. Henceforward let it be associated in all our minds with the march of thought, and not only as a light dancing amusement, suited to the popular lecturer and the feminine intellect.

"In talking of the death of thoughts, I have used the ordinary phrase of speech, but the quantity of thought remaining always the same, there can be no progress, that is, no new birth, without a previous death; yet as thought cannot die, it is clear it is not a philosophical expression. I have pondered long on this, and it has occurred to me, that thought may be *resolved*, that it is the resolution of thought which makes the progress of thought. Yet still there

is another difficulty which perplexes me, and which, in concluding to-day, I propound for your consideration. How can there be the same quantity always of any one thing, and yet it can be resolved into a different thing without loss on either side? For the solution of this, I shall expect written answers the next time we meet, from those amongst you who are in earnest in their studies.’”

The above paper proved so different from what Mr. Staunton had anticipated that he listened to it in spite of himself, and at its conclusion joined in the laughter and applause with which it was greeted.

Helen Trevor, who had been watching both the countenances of Mr. Staunton and Mr. Wymerly, was the first to speak. She said, addressing the latter :

“I wish we had a few more such savants as Mr. Lindsay. I hope you think him charming?”

“Charming is a lady’s word,” was the reply. “Whoever he may represent, he is evidently intensely conceited, and I have no doubt an uncommonly ugly fellow.”

“Oh, Mr. Wymerly!” said Cecilia, “who would have thought you capable of estimating a man by his looks?”

"He is evidently moved thereto by the admiration bestowed upon him by the ladies," said Mr. Staunton. "For my part I agree with Miss Trevor. I have no doubt he possesses hyacinthine locks, and a beardless chin."

"Now I think you have done for him most completely," said Mr. Wymerly. "I did not measure his wisdom by his locks. Ugliness is the invariable accompaniment of profound learning. I have never seen a pretty face with a grain of sense in it."

"We are profoundly obliged to you," said Cecilia.

"I was talking of men," said Mr. Wymerly. "In my experience a pretty man is invariably an ass."

"I am afraid you cannot get out of it so, Wymerly," said Mr. Staunton. "You were propounding it to me gravely, only yesterday, that you never expected to find sense in a woman."

Helen was delighted at this remark. "Oh, thank you, Mr. Staunton! That is delicious! Do tell us some more!"

"Staunton, you are a traitor! You know perfectly well you are representing your own views," said Mr. Wymerly. Then, turning to Miss Trevor, he added, "You cannot more

effectually prove me wronged, than by inquiring further what passed."

"But do you really think that paper was written by a young man?" asked Lucy, innocently.

"Opinions appear to be so divergent about it," said Mr. Trevor, who had been sitting by, much amused at the speculations, "that, to arrive at any certainty, I suggest we should put an advertisement in the first column of the *Times*, asking for the whereabouts of Mr. Theophilus Lindsay, sometime professor of applied scientific moral philosophy."

"And, if after three months he does not appear, what further steps shall we take?" asked the Vicar.

"Oh, but of course he will," said Helen.

Whilst the paper had been reading, old Mary and her assistant, Susan, had been placing a little table in the centre of the lawn; round it she had put a few chairs for the ladies; on it she finally arranged spoons, glasses, and a large old china bowl, full of syllabub. Lucy, whose curiosity was excited by seeing something was going on, stole out of the window to discover what it was, and returned, not a little pleased, to invite the ladies out to partake of it.

"It is not in the least damp, I assure you,

Mrs. Trevor, and the air is quite soft and warm."

So they all followed her, to Mary's great satisfaction, who was standing behind a laurel, watching the result of her preparation, and was near enough to hear it pronounced excellent.

"I wonder we do not more often have syllabub," said Mrs. Trevor; "I do not think I have tasted any since I was a girl. It is so good, it is quite a pity it should go so entirely out of fashion."

"Yes," said Mr. Staunton, "that is quite true. I am not sure that I have ever met with it before. Let me give you another glassful."

"Thanks; you must have an invaluable servant, Miss Carlyle," said Mrs. Trevor. "May I ask for her receipt?"

Lucy laughed. "Yes, she is invaluable to us, but she is despotic in this house, and if I were to ask her for a receipt, she would say, 'Them's as does it, knows how.' Once before I tried to get her to give me one for my brother's cook at Powdrige Court, but that was all I got for my pains. I will try again for you, if you like, but I am sure I shall succeed no better."

"Pray do not trouble yourself," said Mrs. Trevor; "but do you really allow her to be so independent?"

"We cannot help ourselves," said the Vicar, joining in. "Though the person in the house to receive orders, instead of that, she issues them. I suppose in some former transmigration she enlivened the substance of an emperor."

"That's a capital suggestion," said Cecilia. "I shall try and apply that theory to some of my friends. One is often puzzled by the contradictions of conduct and position."

"It would help to explain part of the difficulty," said Mr. Wymerly, "but how are we to get at the regulating power which allows the misplacement of an autocrat's soul in the person of a beggar?"

"We 'suspect it grow'd,'" said Mr. Staunton.

"But how did it get the power to grow?" asked Cecilia.

"Now you are getting beyond my depth," said Mr. Staunton.

"I am afraid Mr. Lindsay was only laughing at his pupils," said Cecilia, not quite liking the turn the conversation was taking.

"The part I liked best," said Mrs. Trevor, "was the suggestion about coal."

"But, mamma," said Helen, "if all the heat was concentrated in one room, we should all

have to live in one room, which would be horrid."

"Especially nice, with a heavy top coming down upon us," said Mr. Staunton.

"I wonder whether it is true—we hear a great deal of it—that the better class of Americans are entering less and less into political life?" said Mr. Wymerly.

"I fancy there is a good deal of truth in it," said Mr. Trevor; "and with that, it is curious to see how well, on the whole, they seem to manage their affairs. There seems almost to be a self-balancing power in a multitude, if it is sufficiently large."

"The exercise of political power seems always to have produced a very invigorating effect upon populations," said Mr. Wymerly.

"Yes," said Mr. Staunton. "We talk and think of populations, as of a collection of ignorant beggars, while the truth is, a population is the pith and marrow of a country, dirty and rude if you please, but full of that common sense which is created by having to do with realities. A poor man calls a spade a spade, unless he is afraid of his landlord."

"And when he is, he still knows it is a spade," added Mr. Trevor.

"Surely we want something more than common sense in a country," said Cecilia.

"Yes, we want beautiful women," said Mr. Staunton.

"You are simply insufferable this evening, Staunton," said Mr. Wymerly; "and as you came with me, your sins are reflected back on my head."

"By no means," said Helen. "I have never heard Mr. Wymerly say anything that had the faintest shadow of likeness to a compliment."

"Is that a reproof, Miss Trevor?"

"Not in the eyes of all sensible people," said Mrs. Trevor.

"There have always been great leaders in the times when republics have most flourished," said the Vicar.

"The kingly element displaying itself in its natural, non-stimulated form," said Mr. Staunton. "I am going to be on my best behaviour, Miss Trevor, for the rest of the evening, and will avoid all things that sensible people should avoid."

"I doubt your capacity for that," said Mr. Wymerly, "so I shall carry you off now. It is getting late. I suppose you will be at Sheredale to-morrow, Mr. Trevor?"

"Certainly. Summers will be there too."

The party now broke up, the two gentlemen walking home with the ladies from Moorton Manor before returning to Wharton House. On their way back, Mr. Staunton remarked that Cecilia was very handsome, but that Miss Trevor was far more *piquante*, a sort of person to keep one awake, you know."

CHAPTER III.

POLLING DAY AT SHEREDALE.

THE next morning, the first time for the last six weeks, began a steady downpour of rain. The want of dew, which had made the evening so enjoyable on the lawn at the Vicarage, was as usual followed by wet, which gave no sign of clearing. As this was the first day of the polling at Sheredale, it was particularly unfortunate for all parties. The country had not yet obtained the ballot, so there was plenty of work on hand for all those interested in the result. But looking after lazy or indifferent voters is pleasanter work in a dry than a wet coat, and when it came to be a question of inducement, to use the euphonism employed by Mr. Magog on the occasion, it was found that rainy weather raised the standard to a degree not advantageous to either of the candidates' pockets.

To one person alone was the condition of the barometer a source of unmitigated satisfaction, and that one was Marion Castleton. Day by day had passed away without her finding the opportunity for speaking to Mr. Carlyle, and each day's delay only made it the more difficult, until the state of tension in which her mind was kept became almost unbearable.

They met at breakfast, when, of course, it was out of the question. After which, Mr. Carlyle each day had ridden off, without returning to Powdridge Court until just before dinner-time. He generally came into the drawing-room on his return home before going to dress, and told them all the small adventures and gossip of the day ; but then Lady Castleton was always there, and there was such an entire absence of suspicion in his manner, such a taking for granted that she was the person who would care most to hear what he had to relate, that it acted upon her like a spell, and she received all his petty details with the apparent interest with which she was expected to hear them. As soon as he had emptied his budget, Mr. Carlyle always rose, and left the room before any one else, in order to be in time for dinner. He was a punctual man, hated being kept waiting, and liked his dinner sent up at the right time.

And every day, while Marion was hoping her mother might go first, and her opportunity come, and was turning over and over in her mind what she could say, Mr. Carlyle got up as usual, and as usual her mother was still in the room.

To say that Marion hated and despised herself would hardly express the contempt she felt for her own conduct, but the stronger the feeling of contempt grew, the more powerless it made her feel. She dreaded to be left alone to her own self-accusations, and though she knew her mother was hopelessly against what she knew she ought to do, yet in her present state of mind her own thoughts were so distracting that she sought Lady Castleton's society to a degree she had not done for a long time, merely as a refuge from reflection. This led her mother to believe that Marion had at last made up her mind to the step she was about to take; and this belief made her show a degree of kindness and consideration to her daughter, which was all the more grateful to the latter, as it contrasted with her own bitter solitary musings.

As long as the weather was fine, and Lucy was still there, the three ladies had spent nearly the whole day together out of doors. All the neighbouring gentry had called upon them, and,

at Mr. Carlyle's particular request, they had been very particular in returning these visits. This sort of life exactly suited Lady Castleton. She enjoyed thoroughly the *prestige* of position, and the ease of luxurious appointments. As the mother of the future Mrs. Carlyle, she did the honours of the house with dignity and grace. She was a clever, capable woman, with the power of making herself very agreeable, if she thought it worth while. In her present position it was worth while. Dinners were out of the question until the marriage had taken place, but a succession of luncheons gave scope enough for the exercise of her power of pleasing. At the end of some weeks it was the universal remark, "How agreeable Lady Castleton was! and what a good thing it was that such a fine old place was again the centre of hospitality." Of course, on all these occasions, Marion had been present, but the truth is, that she had been entirely eclipsed by her mother. To this, however, Lady Castleton did not for the time in the least object. It was to her a kind of Indian summer, when her real one was passed. She knew it would soon be over, but she would make the most of it while she could.

While contented that Marion should not be

dragged over the country during the process of canvassing, Mr. Carlyle had made it his particular request that both she and her mother would be for some hours at least at Sheredale, during the two polling days. To this Lady Castleton had agreed at once, whilst Marion had simply held her tongue, hoping that long before those days arrived she should be far away. Now the days had actually come, and she was as far as ever from the resolution of the difficulties which oppressed her. A room had been engaged at Sheredale, a luncheon ordered, and a party of friends invited to be present. There seemed no escape, when this friendly rain came to her assistance. It was so heavy and persistent that Mr. Carlyle at once said it was out of the question for the ladies to go.

Lady Castleton was disappointed, and objected that it would be rude when their friends arrived if there was no one there to receive them.

This only made Mr. Carlyle the more satisfied that they should not go; he did not approve of being kept in order by any one. So he said, with a manner which was meant to settle the question: "Oh, nobody will come such a day as this, it's out of the question, out of the question." Then turning to Marion, with his pleasantest smile, added, "*I must be allowed to take care*

of you. I hope *we* may be more fortunate to-morrow."

Poor Marion! one day's grace. What could she do but smile back in return?

Mr. Wymerly's first thought that day had been, "Will she be there? Shall I see her again?" the pleasure of seeing her once more almost obliterating in his mind what seeing her there with Mr. Carlyle would mean. That the rain was falling heavily did not seem to him any reason why she might not be there. Of course she would be under cover, but it might make it a little more difficult to get a sight of her.

Sheredale presented a dreary aspect, the display of flags by either party was sadly curtailed; the few which were shown hung down dripping in a melancholy fashion. Every one looked uncomfortable; the number of umbrellas made locomotion on the pavement difficult; the gutters were running full streams, and those who were either pushed into them or had to step across them, were about equally displeased.

The difficulties of the position demanded the full display of Mr. Magog's abilities in influencing his fellow-creatures. On such an occasion as this he was in his full glory. Seated at a table in the tap-room of the "White Cat," with clean

glasses, and constantly renewed jugs of beer beside him, as his various scouts brought in the wet and often tired voters, he rose, fully equal to the necessities of every one.

There was a roaring fire to dry the wet coats, neckerchiefs, or hats; there was a seat for every one; there was the Englishman's universal panacea, beer and tobacco. Soon the room was dense with the smoke from numberless pipes, while the crowning glory of all was Mr. Magog himself.

To promise freely in all directions gives a sense of exhilaration, both to the one who promises as well as to those who are to benefit by his liberality, and by force of telling his listeners that it was from the good old families, such as Mr. Carlyle belonged to, they would get plots of land, and that having once got them they would be independent of wages, and at the same time could join the Union, which would enable them to raise wages to what they pleased, and give them leisure both for tilling their land and for enjoyment, by repeating this sufficiently often, with any other additional promises for those whose wants did not lie in the direction of land, Mr. Magog felt himself to be the all-important man for the district. A sort of lieutenant feudal superior, who was not only showing the way

they should go to the millien, but who was also doing the work of the landlords; though at present they might not be able to see it quite in that light.

Nor in all this was Mr. Magog insincere. He believed in himself altogether, consequently his views must be the right ones, as he could see no flaw in them; and if any one suggested to him the possibility of the landlords not granting land to Unionists, or of their taking it away again if it had been obtained, he would have replied with perfect belief in what he was saying: "They won't do that, it's against their interests. Every one acts for their own interests, they know quite well what it is, only let the people get the land, and you'll see."

John Rodgers and Tom Smith were enjoying themselves greatly in spite of the weather. It was just a lark hooking the men who came to vote, pouncing upon them before the scouts on the other side caught sight of them, and conveying them in triumph either to the White Cat, or the polling booth, as they were or were not prepared to vote for the right candidate.

It is not to be denied that a little gratified personal spite gave a flavour to Mr. Magog's zeal. Mr. Wymerly had eclipsed him at the meeting at Nunneley. Mr. Wymerly did not appear to

be entirely in favour of his views, and it was necessary that Mr. Wymerly should be prevented from doing further mischief.

Meanwhile Mr. Wymerly, Mr. Trevor, and Mr. Summers were hard at work in the committee-room of the first. A good many Liberals arrived early, and the numbers mounted rapidly, then there was a lull. It was time for lunch, so that did not matter, and leaving the room the three friends strolled down the High Street, passing in front of the room that had been engaged for Mr. Carlyle's party. There was a blue flag at the door of the house, which stood open, but the windows were closed, and the face Mr. Wymerly wanted to see was not visible. There were people in the room, but apparently they were all men. It was unreasonable, but it gave him a feeling of discouragement.

They continued their walk until they reached the principal hotel, receiving and returning friendly nods of recognition, even when among their enemies. With a few exceptions, there was so little understanding of the questions at issue, that votes were given rather as retainers of one master or the other, than as the followers of rival systems of politics. The two days of polling were pleasant times for outings, when the small farmers and the shopkeepers put

their horses to their carts, and with their wives and daughters repaired to Sheredale, to see and to be seen. As the farmers met on friendly terms there at the weekly market, they were just as friendly on the present occasion, and though the votes were for the most part what appeared to be party votes, they were much more votes given to the landlord.

Mr. Carlyle was a popular man, his farms were good, at fair rents, he did not himself care about sport, though he preserved largely for the sake of the guests who filled his house in the autumn, and his tenants destroyed or preserved the game on their own farms as they pleased, after the usual quantity had been sent each year to the Court.

Mr. Wymerly had made himself unpopular; he had interfered with the Union, with the farmers, he was strict in requiring that work should be done well, and to time; he was a new man, and though he spoke courteously to every one, there was a tacit assumption in all he said that he knew better than those he addressed, and could teach them what they would be foolish not to learn, which was greatly resented by his bucolic hearers. The result was, that, even amongst those who might have given him votes, as tenants on the property he inherited

from his cousin, there were several who voted for Mr. Carlyle, as the man who let things alone, and did not want to raise the wages of the labourers. Had these same labourers been able to influence the election much, either side, the result would not have been very different. They liked the good old-fashioned, easy-going ways of Mr. Carlyle, and altogether objected to any one whose requirements interfered with the time they began work in the morning, or spent over their dinner in the middle of the day, or left off in the evening, in order to drink or play skittles at the public-house. If their lot was to be made better, it was to be by outside help, and not at all by greater industry or self-denial of their own. Such a view of their condition had never entered their heads, or been put before them by landlord, priest, or propagandist of any kind whatever.

Having taken lunch, Mr. Wymerly returned to the committee-room, leaving his friends to see if there was anything to be done in his behalf in the town. When he arrived, the last report of the numbers received had just come in. It was not encouraging ; during the morning hours he had been a hundred ahead of his opponent, now that number was lessened by half. For the rest of the afternoon it continued

to diminish, until, at the close of that day's poll, not only the whole advantage was lost, but the blues were two hundred ahead of the purple and white.

The enemy was jubilant. Mr. Carlyle returned home in the highest spirits, feeling quite certain of ultimate success, to recount the events of the day; and so fully occupied was he by the triumph of the present, that he never perceived the want of cordiality in Marion's manner, and the entire absence of all genuine interest in his success.

Her thoughts indeed were far away, in the empty house to which Mr. Wymerly was returning with a failing cause, and, as she bitterly said to herself, a failing woman, who has promised what she is too great a coward to perform.

After dinner was over, and after all Lady Castleton's ready sympathy and cleverly-expressed congratulations had come to an end, there was dead silence in the drawing-room at Powdrige Court for a long while, Marion revolving in her own mind how she should manage to get a solitary interview with Mr. Carlyle, for speak she must, and would. So engrossed was she, that she was quite unconscious of the long silence, and Lady Castleton, half suspecting

that compassion for Mr. Wymerly was the cause of it, yet not daring to say anything for fear of adding to the mischief, sat on, uneasily quiet, hoping and fearing.

With a desperate effort, at last Marion half started up, the words ready on her lips to ask for a private interview with Mr. Carlyle, when as she looked up she saw that he was fast asleep, and only slightly moved at the sound she made. She sat down again with a feeling of check, frightened at herself and everything about her. Lady Castleton came to the rescue, with, "My dear Marion, it is time we should retire; we will go quietly, that *he* may not be disturbed."

Marion followed, hopeless and disappointed, longing to stay behind and disturb that placid slumber; but her mother took good care that she preceded her in leaving the room, and for that time at least Mr. Carlyle slept in peace.

The next day proved fine, everything looked fresh with the yesterday's rain; but when Marion looked out and saw the beauty of the garden, her heart was heavy as lead. She said to herself, "It's no use trying, I am doomed, and must give in." She delayed till it was very late making her appearance downstairs, and when at last she entered the breakfast-

room, she heard that Mr. Carlyle was already gone, and had left a message, "That he was very sorry to start without seeing her, but that he hoped she would honour him by soon following."

"Mr. Appleton and some other gentlemen called for him on horseback," said Lady Castleton. "They begged him to allow them to escort him to Sheredale, so under the circumstances he did not like to refuse; but I do not think he was pleased at not seeing you; and really, dear child, you might exert yourself a little more, and be down a little earlier, as you know he likes it."

To this there was no reply, but Marion asked herself whether she should make one more appeal to her mother. The question answered itself, that help from that quarter was hopeless. She sat down to her breakfast, but it was in vain she attempted to eat; she could only swallow a little tea.

The carriage had been ordered at eleven; the ladies were dressed, waiting for it, when the door opened, and a footman entered to say, "The coachman did not know what to do; one of the greys had suddenly gone dead lame, and there was no other horse which could take its place."

Lady Castleton was in consternation. "Couldn't

they send for posthorses? Anything would do."

The man went back, and soon returned, saying that "Coachman says master wouldn't like posthorses to be seen in his carriage; and besides, he didn't believe there were any to be had; all the horses, far and near, had been engaged for weeks."

"Let me speak to him," said Lady Castleton.

A long parley ensued; but whether there was any possibility of getting to Sheredale or no, it was quite evident the coachman would not help her to do so, and she returned disgusted with the man's obstinacy, and really concerned as to the possible consequences of their not doing as they had been asked by Mr. Carlyle.

Marion's indifference only increased her annoyance, and the day passed on with little comfort to either of them.

Mr. Wymerly had not returned to the solitary house in which Marion's imagination had placed him. Mr. Staunton was still his guest. Though he had not cared to ride through the rain to Sheredale, he listened with real interest to Mr. Wymerly's account of the day's fortune. He wished his friend to be returned, and was sorry to hear his report of the numbers.

After dinner, Mr. Wymerly threw himself into an easy chair, thoroughly tired, and hoping for a quiet evening, but he was not left long in peace. There was a ring at the front door, and a servant came in to say, that Mr. Markham wished to see him.

"Show him in here," said Mr. Wymerly, adding to his friend, "Now you shall have a specimen of a country agent."

After the first salutations were past, Mr. Markham said that he had called at Mr. Trevor's request.

"We've been talking this matter over, sir, and I told him I was sure there was foul play somewhere. This whole day I've been in Sheredale, watching those who came to vote, and I've seen a good many go and plump for Carlyle who are well known supporters of our side, and others who used to split their votes have done the same. I couldn't make it out, so I went looking about, and I take it, sir, there's been a many lies told, and a deal of foul play, and I think I know who's at the bottom of it."

"Why, who?"

"You wouldn't think it, but it's that Magog, who was down here, some months back."

"But why should he object to me? I thought he was the poor man's friend."

"Aye, sir, we're all of us that," said Mr. Markham, with a wry grimace, "only we've different ways of showing it. You may depend upon it, sir, you've offended him, and he's paying you off in the only way he knows of. His head quarters are at the White Cat, a small public, in a back street near the Shire Hall, and with him are two men from the village of Nunneley, a drunken carpenter, and another idle fellow I know well. They've been treating to any extent, and they've put it about that you want to keep the poor man from his beer, and to shut up the publics. That would be quite enough of itself, but, besides that, they've said you wouldn't give any plots of land. Now, that's one of Carlyle's strong points. He's always given them to anyone who asked for them."

"But how should that affect the votes, when they are given to those without any?"

"That's what you gentlemen think. But the truth is, it affects you through two sets of men. Those plots enable many of those who hold them to have votes. They are so advantageous that they let at rents that would astonish you, and not a few of them are in the hands of men who would have votes without them. They are literally snapped up, they never stand vacant a minute. Mr. Carlyle has very little idea who

hold a large number of his. He believes the poor people have them, but a third at least are held by small tradesmen, many of whom hold more than one, and grow as fine fruit and vegetables as you have in your garden. Now, sir, I want you to have printed and placarded all over the town, that these things that have been said about you are not true, and I will be happy to ride over to-night and see about it, that it may be printed and posted, the first thing in the morning."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Mr. Wymerly, "but is it not too late to be of any use?"

"I do not pretend that I think it will affect the result of the present contest; but it is of the greatest importance to contradict these things, otherwise every one will believe they are true. Though this time the game may be lost, I hope you mean to live amongst us, and the next time you try we may be better organised. The truth is we've not had a contested election down here for so long, that our side is quite out of working gear, our registers are only half worked up. And then, sir, it's such an immense pity such a fine property as that of Moorton Manor should be held by a female. It ought to be the very backbone of the liberal interest here."

"You must get Miss Moorton a husband," suggested Mr. Staunton.

"Well, sir, a good many say so, but you never can tell what sort ladies may fancy, and it's not every one who would like to have some one giving them leave to do what they like with their own."

"No," said Mr. Staunton, dryly. "It's a great mistake to give property to women."

"I don't know about that, sir, I've nothing to say against Miss Moorton's ways, except that she does not look quite enough after her own interest. There never was a nicer person to deal with, saving for that, which makes it difficult for me sometimes."

"Mr. Trevor seems to think ladies should have votes," said Mr. Wymerly.

"Yes, sir, I know he does, he thinks a great deal of Miss Moorton, and there might be no harm in it if all females were like her, but you see they're not, and somehow it does not seem to be their work."

"You think they want a little assistance from the men," said Mr. Staunton.

"Perhaps I do, sir; it seems more natural, what we've always been used to, but maybe I'm wrong," said Mr. Markham. Then, addressing Mr. Wymerly, he added, "If you think well of

my suggestion, there's no time to lose ; the sooner I'm off the better."

" Really I don't like giving you this trouble."

" No trouble, sir, don't mention it."

" Then I shall be much obliged by your doing so. Won't you take a glass of wine before starting."

" Much obliged, but I'd rather be off at once," said Mr. Markham, rising and bowing to Mr. Staunton, after which Mr. Wymerly accompanied him to the door.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE.

CECILIA met Mr. Trevor at the hall door on his return from Sheredale, eager to hear the fortunes of the day.

"I've nothing good to tell you," was the disappointing announcement, as he got off his horse and entered the house, looking fagged. "I tell you what it is, Cecy, we old men can't work as we used when we were young, and I want my dinner."

"I have no doubt you do, and you shall have it directly. I'm so very sorry if you have been doing all this hard work for no good."

"It's not that I mind," said Mr. Trevor, "but the whole thing has been mismanaged; the hard work ought to have been twice as hard; and some how, I don't know how it is, we never seem to be ready. I

knew the election was inevitable, but the time has slipped by. Neither I nor any one else looked after the voters until quite lately, and the result will be, Wymerly won't be returned; I'm certain of it."

"Are you quite certain? Nobody could say it was your business to look after the voters, at any rate."

"That's all very well for you to say. My immediate interests, it is true, are in another county; but, though you are no longer a minor, politically you are still a cypher, and a great deal more might have been done through Markham and others, if I hadn't just left everything alone."

When they had sat down to dinner, the first thing Cecilia said, was :

"I'm so sorry I'm of no use, indeed that I seem to be in the way; what can we do to alter it?"

"Cecilia, you must marry, I've often told you so before," said Helen; "and now you see how true it is."

"We won't quite ask her to do that, for the sake of our cause either," said Mr. Trevor, "but we must choose as our candidate one who would give votes to women."

"I don't believe Mr. Wymerly would," said Cecilia.

"Before he came here, he really had never considered the question," said Mr. Trevor. "He had never seen any instance where the want of them pressed hard on the Liberal interest. Naturally, we accept limitations that have long existed."

"Do you think he has changed his views?"

"I have reason to think he has considerably modified them. I won't say that he would make a point of their having votes, but I am quite sure that he sees that a large proportion of the stock objections are utterly groundless."

"But, papa," said Helen, "if I had a vote, what should I do with it? I could not sell it for a beautiful horse, because that would be called bribery and corruption, I suppose? and really it seems to me we get on as well under one party as another."

"Unworthy child of your father," said Mr. Trevor, laughing. "I may be glad then that you have none, nor have the least chance ever to have one, that you may not disgrace me."

"That's very unkind of you to say. Why do you not tell me how I am to find out who is the most worthy?"

"Should you think it impossible to find out whether a man was worthy enough to be your husband?"

"Oh, papa, that's quite different."

"Yes, my dear, it is quite different, and a much more important question to be decided, not only for you, but in the interest of our great commonwealth. What her future citizens will be, depends upon their parents. Noble children continue the world's history nobly. Those with worldly minds, mean thoughts, self-indulgent natures, grasping avaricious souls, continue it ignobly. Which of these are to ensue depends quite as much upon the nature and education of the mother as of the father, and the question whom she will choose is a far more important one for the progress of mankind, than most of those that have to be decided by any member of parliament. If our women can decide the one, which public opinion never questions, they surely are as likely to know which set of opinions in the main conduce most to the public good, and to vote for those who advocate them."

"Oh, papa, how terribly serious you make life, and the worst of it is, you are always in the right—it's very tiresome."

"It's a question I am in no hurry for you to be called upon to decide," said Mr. Trevor, affectionately.

"Thank you, papa, that's some comfort."

"Don't you think," asked Cecilia, "seeing

how badly things are going with Mr. Wymerly, that we should all go to Sheredale to-morrow?"

"Yes, I do, I was going to say so. I should like you to be there when the poll closes, that the losing cause may be as much surrounded by friends as the winning one."

"Until the result is certain, I shall still hope," said Cecilia.

The next day Sheredale was in a far greater state of excitement than on the previous one. The rain held off, and both sides mustered as strong as possible for the occasion.

Mr. Markham had done his work well. Everywhere there were posted up large placards, headed—

"GOG *versus* MAGOG!

It's no use telling lies. Vote for WYMERLY,
the real Friend of the

LABOURER.

Perfect freedom of the land,
A fair day's wage for a fair day's work—
He's the true friend.

Gog.

If you doubt *me*, go and ask *him*."

"I hope you approve the way in which I have done it," said Markham, coming up to Mr. Trevor as soon as he saw him. "I asked Mr. Summers what he thought. He staid in town here all last night, and happened to be coming out of

the printing-office just as I went in. He advised my leaving out one sentence. I had another about beer and the public-houses, but he said I'd better just leave it out altogether. We don't want to encourage the people to drink, and the publicans are such ticklish people to deal with, if they think their rights are invaded, that it's best to leave them alone."

"I quite agree with him," said Mr. Trevor. "I think it will do ; but I am not sure that it would not have been better just to have said the reports were untrue, and signed it with Mr. Wymerly's name."

"My object," replied Markham, "was to attract notice."

"It will be quite sure to do that."

"I hope Mr. Wymerly will not be displeased. The whole thing had to be done in a hurry. I wish he could have prepared it himself."

Just then Mr. Wymerly himself rode by, and on being appealed to, said that he quite approved it, and did not think what he might have suggested would have done nearly so well. "It is very good of you to be all here so early," he continued. "May I show you to a room I've engaged near the shire hall, and will you consider yourselves my guests for as long as you care to remain?"

"Thanks. We shall be very glad to show a bold front to the enemy, wherever you like to place us," said Cecilia. "We wish in every way to identify ourselves with the party of progress."

"In fact we are here prepared for martyrdom," added Helen.

Mr. Wymerly smiled. "Let's hope that at least will not be necessary, that some hours of *ennui* may be all you have to endure."

The day wore slowly along, though there were occasional spurts, and Mr. Magog and Co. did not carry things with quite so high a hand as on the preceding one. Still the distance steadily increased between the numbers of the rival candidates, and there could be no doubt about the ultimate result.

It was dull sitting still for many hours, with every fresh report bringing worse news; but Helen came out on the occasion, and caused many a laugh by her odd remarks.

For once too Mr. Staunton threw aside his happy indifference to everything, and was in and out continually. Mr. Summers was pretty constantly there, and Mr. Appleton came in, in a most aggravating state of enjoyment, at the undoubted superiority of his side of the question.

"Too bad, isn't it, Miss Trevor? You should be on our side."

"Thanks, but I prefer the losing one."

"Indeed! How's that? I thought all young ladies liked success."

"Aye; but young ladies ought to like the success of the right side."

"And we are the wrong one? I make you my best bow."

"Of course you are, Mr. Appleton," said Cecilia; "but you will only triumph over us for a short time."

"A pretty long time," I expect, said Mr. Appleton, rubbing his hands with glee. "Mrs. Appleton would have come with me to pay her respects to you ladies, but Carlyle won't let her go. There's something wrong there. I never saw him so put out before. But his ladies have not come. He's been expecting them for the last two hours, and there's no sign of them at all."

"That must be very unpleasant for him," said Cecilia. "I am sorry too; I want to see Miss Castleton; I hear she is a beauty."

"She's a fine girl, no doubt; but I like a little more liveliness," said Mr. Appleton. "She looks much more as though she was going to execution than anything else when I've seen

her. But I must be off, or Carlyle will say I am a traitor in the camp."

About two hours after this, Helen suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, Cecilia, I believe they are here at last. Look at that carriage with post horses. I feel sure it's they. Do look."

And, sure enough, a carriage containing two ladies drove as fast as it could through the crowd, and stopped at the entrance of the house from which Mr. Appleton had come to see them.

"It looks very like it," said Cecilia, "but how shall we be sure? I hope some of our friends will come in who know them."

They had not long to wait before Mr. Appleton returned, looking greatly amused.

"I've seen such a pretty sight," said he. "I felt obliged to give you the benefit of it."

"Oh, Mr. Appleton, we wanted to see you dreadfully," said Helen. "Wasn't that the bride elect who drove past just now?"

"The very same, and that's what I've come to tell you about. A pretty kettle of fish there would have been if she had not come. I should not have wondered if the whole affair had gone off."

"But what has it all been about?" asked Cecilia.

"I told you how put out the bridegroom was.

That, you see, is not a proper frame of mind for any one in such happy circumstances, eh?"

"And one sure of his election, too!" added Helen.

"Ah! well! we'll put that aside for the present. What I have to tell you is much more important."

"I'm dying to hear it."

"After saying such unpleasant things to most of us that we could not think what was the matter with him, Carlyle went into the street to cool himself, and, walking along, saw not far off his own coachman among the crowd. The fellow did not see him, or probably he would have disappeared. As it was, his master was down upon him in a second.

"'You here, John, what does this mean?"

"Carlyle had a hearty laugh when telling us about it. The man started as if he had been shot, and, coming up, told his master what he characterised as a long rigmarole about the grey mare having gone lame, so that it was impossible to use it, and that the ladies said it did not matter, or he would have tried to get post-horses. 'I saw he was telling me lies as fast as he could speak,' said Carlyle, 'so I told him we would talk about that to-morrow; that now he was to get some horses as fast as he possibly

could, and bring the ladies at once.' The man disappeared in a twinkling, the ladies are here. Lady Castleton says she did everything she could to induce him to get other horses, and he wouldn't; so I guess he'll receive the sack to-morrow, and a pretty foolish job he's made of it."

"How very odd of him," said Cecilia.

"Odd enough, but those fellows will do anything for a lark."

"No doubt the horse was lame, but he preferred coming out to amuse himself, to taking the trouble of getting others, and then being tied down to the carriage while they were here. They're all alike, a set of worthless rascals."

"He did not reckon upon there being a lady in the case," said Helen.

"No indeed; ha, ha! ladies upset everything."

"But the pretty scene," asked Cecilia, "we have not heard about it."

"Oh no, more you have. It was the meeting of the lovers. Carlyle is a very old friend of mine, but I can't help laughing to see him play the gallant. He came up with such an air, full of apologies at the inconvenience to which they had been put, and all the rest of it, and then he led the young lady to the best seat, by the

window, and pointed out to her all the beauties of the street, and any notabilities who happened to pass, etc., etc., while I looked on and took a lesson."

"I hope she rewarded him with beaming smiles," said Helen.

"No, faith! the mother did that for her, as well as most of the talking. To tell you the truth, I thought I never saw a girl look more wretched."

"Dear me," said Cecilia. "What can it mean?"

"Oh, it's only the '*nolo episcopari*' of the matrimonial see," said Mr. Appleton, wishing to turn the subject off, thinking he had gone a little too far.

"I would be quite sure it was only that," said Mr. Trevor, gravely, "before the installation takes place."

At five o'clock the poll was declared; the numbers were:

Carlyle 1067

Wymerly 740

327 majority for the Tory.

The distance between the two candidates had continued so steadily on the increase, that when the final declaration was made it was a positive

relief to the Liberal side to find the actual amount polled for their candidate. Mr. Wymerly received almost as much congratulation as Mr. Carlyle, upon the contest having been so well maintained.

When the numbers were known through the town, the crowd became jubilant. The High Street filled rapidly with the friends of both parties; the purples, though beaten, put the best face on the matter, and there was no little chaffing and derision, when two enormous figures supposed to represent Gog and Magog, appeared suddenly above the heads of the multitude. A few stones were thrown at poor Gog, but he shook them off with disdain, and strode on quite unconcerned, while some of his supporters aimed some rotten apples so exactly at the face of Magog, that his red cheeks and large nose were bespattered all over with them, to the intense delight of the crowd, which shouted and jeered as much from one side as the other, with amusement at the extreme neatness with which the blow took effect.

Whilst this was going on below, the houses suddenly put forth a large display of blue in every conceivable material and form, which woefully outdid all that the purples could produce. This was not merely that most of the shops

were blue, their leading principle, the best customers being blue ; but the purples were necessarily outdone on this occasion, the tameness of the colouring making it far less effective where brilliancy is required.

Of course Mr. Carlyle's room overflowed with congratulating friends. Those who before had thought little of him as a member, now found out that he was the man they wanted, and on no account would be left out of the number of his friends ; whilst those who thought any one who was a true blue was to be preferred before any other, and most particularly before any one advocating such extremely out of the way notions as were attributed to Mr. Wymerly, these too swelled the numbers in the room, until it became difficult to breathe, and almost impossible to move.

All this, however, had to be borne, and enjoyed, and to a considerable extent was enjoyed by Mr. Carlyle. He had very good lungs, and did not mind the state of the atmosphere. But it was far otherwise with the ladies of his party, and Mrs. Appleton, seeing that Marion looked as if she could hardly bear it any longer, good-naturedly gave Mr. Carlyle a hint that it would be better to find the carriage.

This, however, was easier to plan than to

perform, but it was set about at once, and drawing Marion's arm within his own, the new member did his best to gain the door, and descend the stairs.

When the entrance was at last reached, there was another pause for a fresh ovation. The crowd, recognising him, set up a continuous round of cheers, before which Mr. Carlyle had to stop, and bow, and smile. When it was seen that his carriage was vainly trying to drive up close to the door, there was a shout, "Horses out," and some of the leading members of the mob forthwith seized hold of the frightened animals, and began to unharness them. Hereupon Mr. Carlyle stepped back, and begged them not to do it, but it was no use; you might as well have spoken to the winds. Out the horses came, and into the carriage Mr. Carlyle, Marion, and her mother were obliged to get, and to submit to be drawn through the town in this time-honoured fashion, amidst the continual cheering of the crowd, waving of flags, and flirting of handkerchiefs from the windows, shouting, and clapping of hands.

When the outskirts of the town were reached, the enthusiastic supporters stopped, unharnessed themselves, let the horses resume their own place, and the carriage, after one last deafening cheer, drive off in peace.

Cecilia had watched with great interest this last scene in the High Street. The room in which she was, was nearly opposite to the one occupied by Mr. Carlyle's party, and during the delay caused by the unharnessing of the horses, she had been able to take a good view of Marion Castleton, as she stood by the side of Mr. Carlyle. With quick, feminine instinct, she perceived that Marion's mind was far away from what was going on before her; and she was shocked at the look in her eyes, more like a hunted wild animal than any thing else she could compare it too. What could it all mean?

But her speculations were interrupted by the announcement that the carriage was ready, that Mr. Wymerly was on horseback at the door, and that all his friends meant to accompany him through the town. Though not a triumphant procession, the Purples formed a goodly show, and were headed by quite a respectable band of music, who played without any regard to facts:

"See the conquering hero comes."

whilst their rear was closed by Gog, on whose head there was now placed a wreath of laurel.

"Never to know when you are beaten is truly a grand quality," said Mr. Trevor, laughing.

"But in this case it is not altogether untrue. I believe at another election we should carry it."

"Dear little papa, how nice of you to say so!" said Helen.

"Why, Helen," said Cecilia, "you profess not to care who gets in!"

"Oh, no, nor do I. But I should like to accompany the successful candidate."

"You are a first-rate politician, Helen," said her father. "There's nothing like a thorough-going partisan."

"Of the winning side," remarked Cecilia.

The outskirts of the town were now reached, and the procession broke up. Mr. Wymerly cantered off with Mr. Staunton, and shortly after Mr. Summers also left, returning by a different road to his own house. One by one every body dispersed, until the carriage was the only vehicle left to pursue its course alone along the high road. Every one was tired, and for some little way the noise of the steadily trotting horses was the only sound which broke the silence.

Presently Helen said, "Are you asleep, papa?"

"No, my dear. What should make you think so?"

"I thought your eyes were shut?"

"So they were, but only to keep out the dust."

"Then I may speak?"

"Assuredly."

"I've been improving upon the suggestion you threw out yesterday, and studying the characters of the charming gentlemen we have been talking to to-day, and I want to know why men who are considered clever, and come from the university, don't speak in their natural voice?"

"Oh, Helen," said Cecilia, "that's just what I have been thinking the whole day. Is it not ridiculous, the affected way in which Mr. Staunton speaks?"

"It's very funny," said Helen; "something made out of intoning and a drawl. I really felt horribly tempted to ask him why he did it, but when he talks to you, it is with such a grand looking-down-upon-you air, that you can only look back with humble adoration."

"A new attitude for you, Helen," said Mr. Trevor.

"But, papa, I'm sure it must have some deep signification. You can express anything by the sound of your voice, and this peculiar mixture of *de haut en bas*, with condescending reserve, must mean a great deal. It has had a most deadening effect upon me."

"What stuff the child does talk!" said Mrs. Trevor.

"So it appears, mamma, but that is only superficially. I want to get at the philosophy of the thing."

"Mr. Summers has a little of it," remarked Cecilia, "but far less than Mr. Staunton: he is not nearly so full of himself."

"Oh, no," said Helen; "I like Mr. Summers. He told me he had been to the races, and when I said how much I had wished to go to them, he said he was sorry he had not known it, as he had no doubt it might have been arranged somehow."

"I like him too," said Cecilia, "there is something so genuine about him; don't you, Mr. Trevor?"

"Yes, I do, but I have not seen much of him at present."

By the time Moorton Manor was reached, there was no one who was not glad the day's work was done.

CHAPTER V.

A GARDEN-PARTY.

THE following day was the one on which Cecilia's garden-party was to take place. It was meant to combine the pleasure of that form of amusement with a dance for the younger members, and, as the weather had been unusually hot this year, the guests were invited from six till ten, that the pleasant coolness of the evening air might be beginning before their arrival.

Moorton Manor was in a state of high preparation the whole day. The picture-gallery had been turned almost into a conservatory, either side being lined with shrubs in pots, with plants in flower in front of them. At one end the band was to be stationed in a gallery which ran across it, whilst at the other a large piece of crimson cloth had been laid down, on which were placed some easy-chairs and sofas, either

for the lookers-on, or for those wearied in the dance to rest. At both ends there was a profusion of sweet-scented shrubs and flowers, and mixed with them, upon marble slabs, every variety of tempting fruits lavishly displayed. It was here the dancing was to take place, the highly-polished floor preventing any fear of injury to the pictures from dust. The gallery was so long that it was divided into three parts by marble tables, on which were placed large blocks of ice encircled by fern leaves, and over them were thrown trailing lengths of ivy, through which the bright mass beneath glittered with a most refreshing look of coolness.

Florentine baskets filled with flowers, lined the staircase which led up to the gallery, filling the air with fragrance, and passers by with that delicious sense of refinement and happiness, which is peculiar to the sweet scents of flowers.

The picture-gallery was on the second floor, and noble as were its dimensions, they were almost surpassed by those of the double old oak staircase by which it was entered. The carving of the pillars which supported the rail, was of the very finest description, but its especial peculiarity was, that the centre of each one contained medallions, inlaid, of richly

coloured marbles, which contrasted by their dark setting, gave a very rich effect.

On this occasion all the rooms on the ground floor were thrown open, and nothing was spared that could enhance their general effect, or give pleasure to the invited guests. The pleasure grounds were on a par with the house, velvety lawns shaded by grand old trees, amongst which were particularly conspicuous some remarkably fine cedars and pines; brilliant flower beds; winding walks, sufficiently trim to have a cared for look, and yet wild enough to seem as if they were part of a wood, succeeded one another in all directions, and left any one who was there for the first time well nigh in despair where to go first, each looking the one of all others it would be the most tempting to try.

All the day Helen had been in a state of supreme bliss, she liked the bustle, she had great talent in arranging flowers, and enjoyed immensely going round and giving a fresh touch, now to this lovely rose, now to that gorgeous lily, and then returning to Cecilia, who was quietly reading in the library, saying, "It would be quite perfect everywhere, only we want some more mignonette, or heliotrope, or a thought more colour in this, that, or the other place."

"Then have it, dear Helen," was the constant

reply, and Helen vanished again, soon to re-appear with some fresh suggestion or criticism.

Cecilia was very much disappointed at the result of the election. She felt as if the county to which she belonged had disgraced itself, and greatly exaggerating the check her party had received, that the world must be going back when anywhere such a man as Mr. Carlyle could be preferred to Mr. Wymerly. Personally, too, she felt as though her own means of usefulness were diminished. With a member representing her side of the question, she had been planning a number of ways in which rapid results were to follow for the benefit of her neighbourhood in particular ; and through that the rest of England, and through England the world ; herself suggesting these ways, and keeping Mr. Wymerly up to the mark, as was the province of a woman to do, when he might be tired, and disgusted with factious opposition, or continuous difficulties.

Now it seemed all to have come to an end. Nothing appeared left to her to do that was worth doing. It was all on so small a scale, there was nothing in it on which her imagination could lay hold. It was work that would bring its own support, however difficult—to influence the law-making of your country ; but merely to assist

in the petty detail belonging to a well-ordered estate, or even village—why it was what so many others could do better than she could ; there was Markham for the one, and the other was the Vicar's work.

In spite of all this depression she fully realised the importance of putting a good face on the matter, and determined that everything should be done to do honour to Mr. Wymerly at this party. But she was very glad to hand over to Helen all criticism and minor detail ; while she, equally characteristically, was refreshing her mind by some chapters of a life of Savonarola, where she read what that great man did for the liberties of his beautiful Florence. Yet she sighed as she thought what the men of those days did, and what pigmies we now seem to be.

However, as the day wore on, she began to think that perhaps, after all, matters were not quite so bad as she had been fancying ; and her spirits rose sufficiently for her to go into Helen's room, and see that the flowers which were to be fastened into her hair, were put in so as to show off Miss Trevor to the greatest advantage.

Cecilia was absolutely free from personal vanity, but careless as she was about her own appearance, she was very particular how Helen looked, and always made a point of inspecting

her before allowing her to appear, on all important occasions.

To this party every one had been invited—not only all the *élite* of the neighbourhood, but, as it was meant to be partly a political manifesto, without regard to sides, also a good many of those who occupy that middle position between those we visit and those we do not visit; yet who on all similar occasions receive invitations, and feel very much affronted if left out.

When the two girls were ready dressed, they went down into the drawing room, where they found Mr. and Mrs. Trevor waiting them. They had hardly time to shut the door before there was a ring at the hall-door, and Mr. Trevor had scarcely finished saying to Cecilia that he hoped she would make a particular point of doing honour to those belonging to the defeated side, when the butler announced the first arrivals, and from that time onwards there was one continuous stream of guests, through the drawing-rooms, on to the lawns, until pretty nearly every one had come.

Nearly every one; but, as usual at these gatherings, the least important people came first. It was not often that a good many of them had the chance of a party at Moorton Manor; and those to whom it was a rare occurrence came

with the determination of making the most of it. They considered it a mark of politeness to come at the time you are asked, and equally so to stay till the end, as showing how much you have enjoyed yourself.

The house and grounds were so spacious that, though there were assembled about two hundred persons, when scattered about it looked as though there might be about twenty. This made it so much the pleasanter for every one, giving a freedom of enjoyment unattainable in smaller places. Cecilia, supported by Mr. and Mrs. Trevor, received her guests with perfect dignity and self-possession. She was clever, too, in saying the right thing to the right person ; but, when her visitors had passed on and dispersed themselves, some knowing what to do, and some without the slightest idea which way to turn, or what was expected of them in such unusual surroundings, it was Helen Trevor who was always ready to be pleasant to every one, and to see that the silver pheasants, and the pond with the gold-fish, and all the other wonders of the place, were surrounded by groups of admirers.

Helen was greatly amused by it all ; her quick sense of humour made her ready to see the comic side of everything, and willing to be

pleasant to those by whom otherwise she would have been bored.

When Mr. Summers came, too, he joined her, and was of great use in telling her who was who, and helping to keep every one amused and moving.

Mr. Wymerly and Mr. Staunton came late ; the latter had staid on "three days longer than he possibly could," in order to be present on this occasion ; but he was not to return at night to Wharton House, but to be driven to the next station, where he could catch the night mail to take him home.

When the excitement attendant on the election was at its full height, Mr. Wymerly had had comparatively speaking, no time to let his thoughts dwell upon his relation to Marion Castleton. She was always in the background of his mind, but the immediate work before him was too exacting in its demands to allow of other speculations. Now that he was the defeated candidate it was far otherwise, and he had passed the whole morning in a state of depression and anxiety that made him look forward to Mr. Staunton's departure as a great relief. Marion had said she would not come to the party, as she had also said that she would write to him from London ; but no letter had arrived,

and, as far as he could ascertain, the Castletons were still at Powdridge Court. He should know in a few hours whether she had kept her word ; but the very doubt made him late in going. Things seemed unfavourable, and if—well, he did not finish the question even mentally—what should he do ? Mr. Staunton, always lazy in his movements, was quite contented to go at any time ; half-an-hour would be ample for a little amusement with Helen. Miss Moorton was fatiguing—she required you to talk sense ; but “ the little one ” (as he called her) was pleasant enough ; and so it came about that these two first made their appearance when everyone had come excepting the party from Powdridge Court.

Cecilia had left the drawing-room, and was on the terrace which ran along that side of the house. The full harvest-moon was rising grandly from behind the trees, though there was still so much daylight left that it did not at present add much to the light. The air was perfectly soft and warm, and heavy with the scent from the orange-trees in full flower, which stood in a row beneath the windows. The band, which had been stationed in the garden until it was wanted for the dancing, had just ceased playing, having been summoned to take its place in the picture-gallery by Mr. Trevor, who

was busy there, attending to arranging couples between those who had many acquaintances and some who had none. Cecilia lingered behind, she was already weary of her guests, the part played by the hostess is neither a sinecure nor a pleasure; the attractions of the hour and the place were too irresistible, and she drank in the loveliness, and quiet, and sweet scents, with the added delight of its being a stolen enjoyment which must cease speedily. While still unable to tear herself away, Mr. Wymerly stepped on to the terrace with Mr. Staunton, and turned her thoughts to the baffled hopes of the preceding days.

"Oh, Mr. Wymerly," she exclaimed, "it is very disappointing. Mr. Trevor says that we ought not to think so, but I cannot help it, I am very sorry."

"It is very good of you to care about it. All my friends have been very good. Of course I regret how things have turned out. I don't think the political horizon is particularly encouraging just at present."

"Of course not," said Mr. Staunton; "now it will not have the benefit of your talents and energy. For my part, I am thankful to be able to look forward to paying you another visit here, when you will not be too much absorbed by the nation."

"That's the way he has been talking all the morning," said Mr. Wymerly to Cecilia; "my only consolation has been the entire absence of coherence, from first to last, in all he has said."

"That is the highest praise, Wymerly; '*l'inattendu*' is the one thing that makes life enjoyable—but what have been my especial sins?"

"The endeavour to destroy all interest in life," replied Mr. Wymerly, laughing. "Your propositions, as far as I am capable of entering into them, were, that nothing is worth anything; that it is no use disturbing your serenity about things which only last a few years, and then come to an entire end; that everything will go on quite independently of anything you may do, and, finally, that man is the highest creation, and everything depends on what he evolves. I thought you so hopelessly illogical, that I forbore any attempt at putting you right, but I ask Miss Moorton, whether there is anything to be made out of such material as that?"

"Excuse me, Wymerly, you are a mere partisan; as such it is impossible to you to represent fairly any side of the question but your own, so I cannot stay to hear you traduce all my noble sentiments in this way, and, with Miss Moorton's permission, I will find my way to the picture-gallery."

As Mr. Staunton went off, fresh guests were seen advancing, who, as they drew near, were announced as, Mr. Carlyle, Lady Castleton, and Miss Castleton.

As they stepped on to the terrace, Cecilia went forward to receive them, and Mr. Carlyle, perceiving Mr. Wymerly, went up to him, offered his hand, and said :

“Allow me to congratulate you upon a well-fought contest. After all, you are the lucky man. I am in harness, and you are free.” Then turning to his ladies, he added, “Permit me to introduce you to Lady Castleton, Miss Castleton.”

What could Mr. Wymerly do, but shake hands in the first instance, and bow in the next?

Marion neither looked nor moved, but Lady Castleton said, with her most gracious manner :

“Very happy to meet you here, Mr. Wymerly.”

At this moment Mr. Trevor made his appearance. “I heard you were come, Mr. Carlyle. We have been waiting for you to open the dance. Will you take Miss Moorton? Mr. Wymerly, will you follow with Miss Castleton? And I hope you will put up with me?” added he, turning to Lady Castleton.

"Delighted, I am sure, Mr. Trevor."

Mr. Carlyle protested that his dancing days were over, but Cecilia would not let him off, and putting her arm into his, led the way upstairs.

After a moment's hesitation Mr. Wymerly offered his arm to Marion, who mechanically accepted it, and followed them, the rear being brought up by Lady Castleton and Mr. Trevor.

As they ascended the stairs, not one word passed between Marion and Mr. Wymerly. When they were placed in the dance, he said to her, as he might if they had been the complete strangers they were supposed to be :

"This is a fine house. Were you ever here before?"

No reproaches could have told upon Marion as the absolute contempt did, of those few words. Then they were parted for ever. Henceforth, they were to meet as utter strangers. And there was no inward consciousness to enable her to bear it. She knew that her conduct was simply despicable, that she deserved it all, and had only herself to blame. She made no reply, she could not. Every thing swam before her, while her heart beat so violently as almost to take away all power of breathing. It was with the utmost difficulty

she managed to go through the dance without betraying the agitation she was in; and all the more so, that Mr. Wymerly's manner was perfectly collected and scrupulously polite.

When, however, the last figure was ended, instead of leading her back to Lady Castleton, he merely bowed and left her, leaving her to find her way alone to the nearest seat.

Passing rapidly through the room, Mr. Wymerly descended the stairs, called for his horse, which had been ordered to follow him—as the trap in which he came was to take on Mr. Staunton—and as soon as it was brought round mounted it and rode off.

The Vicar and Lucy had come pretty early. Both immensely enjoyed being at the Manor House. Lucy had the greatest admiration for Cecilia, while to her brother every minute spent under her roof was becoming more and more a painful piece of indulgence. The more he felt that she was everything to him, the more evident it became to him that their present relation could never be changed; not only did her social position make it out of the question, but the nobility of her nature, in the Vicar's eyes, made it still more so. That she required you to talk sense, which bored Mr. Staunton made her a di-

vinity to the less self-satisfied Vicar, and the more he struggled against her growing attraction the more irresistible it became.

There were a good many unmarried girls in the neighbourhood who thought a bachelor Vicar a great mistake. They were many of them longing for a sphere, tired of home, tired of three or four daughters having to do what was only employment enough for one, tired of petty details without interest, and without responsibility to ennoble them. There were several mothers, and even some fathers, who would have given their girls willingly to Mr. Carlyle, poor though he was; there was something so unexceptionable in the position of a clergyman's wife; but Mr. Carlyle seemed quite unconscious of all this, and gave no sign that could by any possibility be interpreted into any particular interest in any one of them.

During the evening he had been rather bothered than otherwise by the various pieces of politeness shown towards him, and was glad when the dancing began, that he might stand quietly on one side, and watch every thing that Cecilia did.

So it happened that when Mr. Wymerly left Marion standing alone, the Vicar was close by, and no sooner perceived her rather forlorn ap-

pearance, than he advanced towards her, and offered to find her a seat.

This act of ordinary politeness nearly upset Marion's self-control ; but she managed to keep back the rising tears, and to follow Mr. Carlyle's leadership through the crowd. It was evident enough that something had gone very wrong with her, and that she was hardly able to bear it, so her future brother-in-law led her into an adjoining room, and placed her where she could avoid observation.

There she would have been only too glad to remain until it was time to go ; but she was not left long in peace, Lady Castleton and Mr. Trevor came in search of her ; she was obliged to re-appear, and join in several more dances. She wondered at herself, how she managed to go through with it all ; but the habit of society stood her in good stead, and though it was impossible not to notice her extreme paleness, as that might be attributed to many causes, it passed as a thing that was a pity, but nothing more.

As all things come to an end, so did this weary evening, and as they drove back to Powdridge Court, Lady Castleton kept up an animated conversation with Mr. Carlyle ; she half knew how trying it must have been to her daughter

to meet Mr. Wymerly, and she dreaded anything being said that might give Mr. Carlyle any suspicions about him. It was no slight relief to her as well as to Marion when they drove up to the front entrance, and shortly afterwards separated for the night.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER THE PARTY.

MR. CARLYLE went into the library when the ladies disappeared ; he had one or two papers he wished to look at before retiring. It was still early, he was accustomed to late hours, and to-night, being in a particularly satisfied frame of mind, was not at all inclined for sleep.

He sat there for about an hour, busily employed, when there was a low knock at the door, and upon his saying "Come in !" there entered Mrs. Sykes, the housekeeper. She made a low curtsy, and said :

"You are surprised to see me, sir, and I never before came with such a heavy heart to speak to you."

"Why, Mrs. Sykes, what is the matter ? Isn't the venison all right ?"

"It's quite different from that, sir. I've lived

here for forty years ; you were a mere child when I first came ; and proud enough your mother was of you. Since then I've seen much happen to the family, both good and ill—but I never knew anything like what's going on now under your very eyes, and you know nothing about it, if all is true that I hear, sir ; and I can't hold my tongue no longer, though you may think I'm interfering where I've no business."

"What is it?" said Mr. Carlyle ; "which of the servants is plaguing you now?"

"It's none of the servants, sir."

"But I can't help you until you tell me what it is," replied her master, not in the least alarmed by her manner.

"No, sir ; but I hardly know how to begin."

"Well, Mrs. Sykes—don't make troubles of nothing. If you've anything to tell me, do so ; if not——"

"I didn't come here to go away without telling you," said Mrs. Sykes, interrupting her master, who, she feared, was going to send her out of the room ; "and as there's no one else to do it, I must. They say, sir, that Miss Castleton is an old friend of Mr. Wymerly, and has been meeting him ever so many times, out in the Park here."

"And you listen to such stuff, Mrs. Sykes?" said Mr. Carlyle sternly.

"I should have been only too glad not to listen to it, sir," said Mrs. Sykes with quiet dignity. "The first time it was said, I told the servants to hold their tongues, and mind their own business; but I've heard so much about it since, I couldn't refuse to listen. The stable-boy, Will, told the coachman he saw them with his own eyes; the coachman repeated it in the servants' hall, and now it's the common talk downstairs. You believe Miss Castleton has gone to bed, sir, but Jane Cleaver has just been in to tell me that it's no such thing, and that she has been sent out of the room because my lady, and her mistress, are quarrelling so. Now, sir—that's not the sort of thing for a young servant to spread over the house."

"There must be some mistake in all this, Mrs. Sykes," said Mr. Carlyle with great self-possession. "I've heard enough. Be so good as to take my compliments to Miss Castleton, and request her to come down here to me. Without her mother," he added, laying a strong emphasis on the last three words.

Mrs. Sykes, satisfied that her master was really roused, and would look into the matter, left the room without another word.

When Marion and her mother had reached the head of the stairs, they bid each other good-night and went to their respective rooms, Lady Castleton saying, with some anxiety :

“ You look very tired, dear Marion, but I hope you have enjoyed it.”

“ An odd sort of enjoyment, mamma,” was the unwelcome reply.

“ Well, well, dear ; let’s hope the enjoyment is to come,” said Lady Castleton, attempting to kiss her again ; but Marion turned abruptly away and went off to her room.

Arrived there, she shut the door, and, throwing herself down on the sofa, buried her face in her hands and groaned aloud.

Whichever way she turned her thoughts, everything was dark. It was too late now to do anything, and if it were not, Mr. Wymerly was irrecoverably lost.

“ How utterly he despises me he has shown only too plainly to-night ; and how could it be otherwise ? I am the meanest creature alive ; there is no excuse for me ; it is all my own doing. And what a life before me ! And I am so young, never from this moment until I die to have one moment’s happiness—to be tied to this dull, formal old man ! Oh, I hate him ! I hate him ! How can I bear it ! I can’t, but

oh ! how can I help myself ? Oh ! Lawrence ; if you only knew what I am suffering, you would forgive me ; you would carry me off where we might be together, and happy !”

And then her despair made her work herself into a state of anger with Mr. Wymerly. Why had he given her up so easily ? If he had really cared for her he might have known it was all her mother’s doing. What could a girl do when her mother opposed her, unless her lover helped her ? And instead, he had gone away just when he ought to have stayed. It was cruel—too cruel !

She rose from her seat and walked backwards and forwards in the room : movement seemed to give her some relief. Her maid came to undress her, but was dismissed. Marion said she wanted no help. As the girl left the room Lady Castleton entered it ; she also had been considering the present position with no little uneasiness, and came to the conclusion that she had better give Marion a little advice. Few mothers understand how often they defeat their own ends through a little advice—and Lady Castleton least of all.

As she entered, Marion’s back was towards the door, she did not hear her come in, and it was with a little scream of terror she turned round when her mother began to speak.

"I am sorry I frightened you, Marion, but I had a few words I wanted to say to you, so I hope you'll listen."

"Well," said Marion sullenly, still standing.

"Won't you sit down, dear? we can speak more comfortably so."

"No, thank you, mamma, I want to go to bed."

"I will not keep you a minute, dear, but really I do think you might look a little less miserable than you do. All this evening I have been in terror, lest Mr. Carlyle should ask me what was the matter with you."

"I only wish he had, and what would you have said?"

"That I did not know, Marion. When girls have nothing to complain of, and have a brilliant future before them, it does appear in very bad taste to go about looking as if they had no prospect at all. If Lucy Carlyle were to look dull, I should think it natural enough, poor child; but she, on the contrary, always looks the picture of health and content. I wish you would take a lesson from her, dear."

"Then I will tell you, mamma," said Marion, with a shrillness in her tone which made her mother shiver. "It is because you are forcing me to marry a man I hate, whilst you know I ought to marry another, whom I love entirely."

"My dear Marion, I think you might modulate the sound of your voice a little more, when you say such remarkable things as you have just done. The whole house will hear you," and Lady Castleton opened the room door to see if there was any one near, and perceiving Jane Cleaver, she said, "You need not wait, your mistress will not want you to-night."

So Jane, who had been listening with all her might, attracted in the first instance by the little scream Marion had given on her mother's entrance, was obliged to go off, without, however, having heard much, except that there was quarrelling going on.

"I do not care who hears me," said Marion, when her mother returned; "I only wish Mr. Carlyle would, and then, at least, he would know how his kindness is appreciated."

"My dear Marion, you are over tired, let me give you a sedative," said Lady Castleton, now really alarmed.

"Yes, mamma, and will that give me back my peace of mind?—will it give me back my freedom?"

"It will enable you to sleep, and to-morrow you will see things more rationally."

Lady Castleton left the room to find an ano-

dyne for Marion, but it was not where she expected; it was some time before she found it and could return to her daughter's room. Marion meanwhile was working herself up every minute into an increased condition of misery and excitement. Lady Castleton had but just re-entered the room, when Mrs. Sykes came to the door, and delivered her message with no little satisfaction. There was no love lost between her and either of the two ladies.

On hearing it, Marion started up at once, and with a half-uttered "Thank God!" she rushed out of the room and down the stairs to the library. Her mother first tried to stop her, and then to follow, but Mrs. Sykes repeated, with so much meaning, that her master particularly desired to see the young lady alone, that she was obliged to turn off to her own room, full of apprehension.

When Marion opened the door, Mr. Carlyle rose, and said: "I am very sorry to ask you to come down at this time, but it is better for both of us that you should personally enable me to contradict a foolish piece of gossip I have just heard. I have no doubt whatever that you will be as shocked at it as anybody; but when such things are said, it is necessary to trace them, and put a stop to them at once."

Whilst saying this, Mr. Carlyle had placed a chair for Marion ; but she only leant her arms on the back of it, and continued standing.

"I believe I am right," continued Mr. Carlyle, "that you were unacquainted with Mr. Wymerly until you heard of him in connexion with the election, and that you were introduced to him to-night for the first time?"

Marion made no reply.

Mr. Carlyle looked surprised, but continued :

"I have been told that you not only knew him before, but that whilst staying here as my engaged wife, you have met him in the Park."

"It is perfectly true," said Marion, in a husky voice.

Mr. Carlyle, who had reseated himself, here rose, and said with some excitement :

"True, Miss Castleton ! Do I hear you rightly?"

Marion half came round the chair, and slipped on to it to prevent herself from falling, while she said :

"Mr. Carlyle, I have treated you shamefully. What I have done has no excuse whatever. I deserve whatever you may think of me. You have been deceived from first to last. I have longed, as no one ever longed before, to tell you the plain truth ; but I had not the courage, and

nobody knows how thankful I am you should hear it now."

It was Mr. Carlyle's turn to be silent now ; it would be impossible to exaggerate his surprise and dismay. After a minute Marion continued :

"Though I do not tell it you as the least excuse, it is right you should know that more than a year ago, Mr. Wymerly and I met abroad ; we became mutually attached, and were engaged to be married, when my mother, thinking we should 'not have enough to live on, insisted upon breaking off the engagement.

"Damn the mother," muttered Mr. Carlyle.

"Since then I had not seen him, until one day I met him in the Park here ; we spoke, and I discovered that I had never received various letters which he had written to me. If I had received them nothing would have made me engage myself to any one else. I then promised him to tell you how matters had been between us, and to throw myself upon your compassion ; but my courage failed me. I did not do so ; for this I suffer my present humiliation. I know you cannot forgive me ; I do not expect it."

Her confession once begun, the relief was so intense to Marion that she neither stopped nor hesitated, and was only too glad to take the whole disgrace upon herself. It was far better

than the intolerable burden of the past concealment.

To such a man as Mr. Carlyle—one who had always lived in prosperity, whose course of life had been so smooth that he had had no experience of the deeper sufferings of life, who had always held his head erect as he passed his fellow-creatures, and to whom those fellow-creatures had always doffed the hat, or dropped the curtsy, as was the fashion in rural districts to the great man of the place—Marion's confession came as an almost incomprehensible blow. That a young girl, whom, although he was going to make her his wife, he looked upon almost as his daughter, should have been sufficiently worldly wise to behave as she had done, shocked him beyond measure. Mr. Carlyle, though neither clever, nor professing any morality beyond what is usual amongst gentlemen, a kind of easy-going virtue, which accommodates itself to the social position of those towards whom it is exercised, would have been quite incapable of treating a lady as Marion had treated him. He would not have felt the temptation that had induced Lady Castleton to act as she had done; nor would his imagination enable him to make any excuses for such a dereliction of the plain code of honour in such matters.

After Marion ceased speaking, Mr. Carlyle sat turning the astounding information he had just received over and over in his own mind, quite unable to make it out, and quite unconscious how long he had continued doing so, until a slight movement of Marion's recalled him to her presence ; and he turned towards her a look of such bewildered surprise, that guilty as she felt before, her distress now was redoubled, and she half moved towards him ; when perceiving her intention, he waved her away with his hand, and forced her to stop short.

He then said, " Am I to understand, Miss Castleton, that you were intending to become Mrs. Carlyle, without the slightest personal regard for me?"

There was dead silence.

" That you were willing to take my gifts, and even to wear my jewels, whilst wishing to be the wife of another man ?"

No answer.

" That you have done me the honour of making me an old fool in the eyes of my neighbours and friends, and would even have been good enough to avoid this by going through with the farce, had not your imprudence betrayed you to a stable boy, to whom I am indebted for my release."

Marion started at this remark. It was a humiliation for which she was not prepared.

"I do not understand you, sir?"

"Perhaps not, but fortunately for myself I do. I did hope you would have been able to afford me some explanation of conduct which I will not characterise, but your silence is more truthful than your words might have been. For that I am indebted to you. I will not detain you any longer. Be so good as to inform your mother that my carriage will be at her disposal at the earliest convenience for both of you to leave here to-morrow morning. When you are Mr. Wymerly's wife it will be a pleasant subject for conversation: the folly of the old man, and how well you got out of it."

Here Mr. Carlyle rose, walked to the door, and opened it for Marion to pass out, which she did with feelings in which all sense of relief was overpowered by shame and remorse. She had expected that Mr. Carlyle would have been very angry with her; she almost feared he would have insisted upon her keeping to her engagement. She forgot that he was no longer a young man. She was quite unprepared to be treated with common sense, and to have her conduct placed before her in its true colours; and she left the room without any hope for the

future, with the sole conviction that everything was at an end both with regard to Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Wymerly.

When the door was closed and Mr. Carlyle found himself alone again, he sat down in his chair, and endeavoured to continue the occupation which Mrs. Sykes had interrupted ; but the attempt was vain, wounded vanity and self love tyrannised over his thoughts, mixed with no small quantity of disappointed affection.

Mr. Carlyle had never had any grand "*affaire du cœur*," in his younger days. In Marion he had seen a fair young thing to cheer the declining years of life, when the animal spirits are less elastic, and life seems dull, looked at with sober eyes. She had been staying many weeks at Powdridge Court, he had come to look for her presence as a matter of course ; and hurt as he was at her conduct, it was with a feeling of real sadness that he thought of himself left alone again, without any young life about him.

He threw himself back in his chair, while his eyes grew moist as he contemplated his shattered hopes. If Marion could have seen him then, she would have felt as she had not yet done, that it was not only with her own happiness that she had been playing. Absorbed with her own position, she had hardly thought at all

about Mr. Carlyle, excepting as he stood in the way of Mr. Wymerly. She had never thought that he too might have feelings like other people ; and even now her sense of shame was far more for her own deceitfulness and want of courage in avoiding being placed in a position that ought to be impossible to any one with right womanly feeling, than for any injury she might have done to Mr. Carlyle's affections.

It was fortunate for Mr. Carlyle that it was not his habit to pity himself ; his life had been too prosperous, his position too assured for that, and it was not long before his present mood, which he would have designated as sentimental weakness, gave way to a far different one, and one which permitted no return of softness and regret. He became very angry, very indignant that any one should have dared to treat him as Marion and her mother had done ; and whilst this frame of mind was at its height ; he rang the bell violently.

When the footman answered it, he desired that Mrs. Sykes should come to him immediately ; and the man in delivering the order also reported that master seemed in a devil of a rage.

When Mrs. Sykes entered, Mr. Carlyle took ten guineas from his writing-table, and giving

them to her, said, "Mrs. Sykes, you have done me a great service. I will thank you to receive back from Miss Castleton the family jewels; and to replace them where they are kept. Here is the key. Also, you will see that the two ladies leave this house to-morrow morning before twelve o'clock. I shall breakfast in this room; and I look to you to take care that I am not in any way troubled by their presence. I shall not see either of them again. These are my orders. I shall be obliged to you to see that they are strictly carried out."

"I will do so, sir," was all Mrs. Sykes replied. She knew her master too well to add anything more, and curtseying, left the room.

It was two long hours before Mr. Carlyle went to his own room. It was broad daylight before any sleep came to his relief.

When the door of the library was closed upon Marion, she crossed the hall very slowly, the influence of Mr. Carlyle still upon her; but arrived at the foot of the stairs, her heart gave a great leap of joy, and she rushed up them with an impetus that almost knocked her mother down, who was waiting for her return at the top of them.

"Well, Marion?"

"Indeed; it is well. I'm free, I'm free!" was

Marion's alarming exclamation, as her mother, taking hold of her arm, dragged her into her bedroom. Arrived there, and the door closed, Marion threw her arms round Lady Castleton's neck and kissing her, exclaimed again, "Oh, mother, dear, I'm free, I'm free!"

Instead of returning her caress, Lady Castleton pushed her away, and said, "What do you mean, child?"

"Just what I say. Oh the joy!" answered Marion, walking rapidly backwards and forwards across the room.

"Marion, you try me too much. How can you be free?"

"We're to leave to-morrow morning, mother dear. All this hateful mockery is at an end. I've told Mr. Carlyle the truth, and now I can be myself again."

"Told him the truth! Leave to-morrow morning!" exclaimed Lady Castleton, aghast.

"Don't vex yourself about it," exclaimed Marion, somewhat startled by the expression of her mother's face; "I could not marry that man, anything was better than that, and now it is quite impossible."

"Marion," said Lady Castleton, "you don't know what you've done. I will tell you, and then, ungrateful girl, you can rejoice at the

position in which you've placed me. I have done everything for you, and this is what you have done for me." And Lady Castleton, taking up her purse, which was lying upon the table, opened it, placing upon the cloth the whole of its contents. Three sovereigns lay there, and a couple of shillings.

"Look, child; that is all the money I have in the world, or shall have for another two months, and I leave you to guess whether we can live upon that for the next two months. It is impossible for us to leave here to-morrow, quite impossible."

"But, mamma, how can this be? We have always had enough to live upon till now."

"How can it be? Because a thoughtless ungrateful child, who only thinks of her own happiness, and that she is much wiser than her mother, who has to provide the means for her subsistence, has reduced her poor old mother to this pass."

"Oh, mamma, mamma, how can you say such things?"

"Because it is true, Marion. You were engaged in a perfectly unexceptional manner; your future and mine were well assured. Few girls have such opportunities as you had. With your prospects, in order to do you honour, I did

not hesitate to spend my income in procuring both for you and myself a wardrobe suited to those prospects. Mr. Carlyle, with that generosity which I have found in all my transactions with him, never let me have any expenses, and as I was to continue his guest until the wedding, and afterwards for as long as I pleased, I have spent every farthing I possessed, excepting what you now see before you, on your *trousseau*, and on the necessary dresses for myself. So now you can understand in what a position your conduct has placed us both."

Almost a sensation of fear crept over Marion as her mother said this. It was the first time that she had been brought face to face with actual want of money. Even now, she did not know what it meant, but she saw there was a real difficulty; so she said, "I'm very sorry, mamma, but you would not have me sell myself."

"I would not have you talk such nonsense, nor use such unladylike expressions. You may think it very fine to say you cannot sell yourself, but let me tell you, you have never had a chance. When people buy it is something that has value; you are simply worth nothing; no one will bid for you."

After a pause, Lady Castleton resumed,

"Mr. Carlyle has made you many presents ; where are they ?"

"I will collect them, and leave them with the housekeeper, to return to him."

"You had better do so ; put them upon the table in your room, I will hand them to Mrs. Sykes ; and now leave me."

Marion spent the next two hours in preparing to leave. At last, thoroughly wearied out, she went to bed, and fell into so deep a sleep that she was quite unconscious that her mother came into her room during it.

Lady Castleton was dreadfully puzzled what to do. She was intensely mortified by the failure of her schemes just when they were on the eve of accomplishment. She had not given Marion credit for the inconvenient truthfulness she had just displayed. She felt it was no use planning for a daughter who could upset the wisest arrangements for a sentimental grievance. She had been accustomed to manage Marion. For the first time she realised that her little girl was an independent human being with a will of her own, who might one day also be her mother's judge. Lady Castleton sat on a long while, pondering what her next step should be. She had no very near relations ; the nearest was an uncle, a Mr. Stapleton, her own mother's

only brother. Though many years younger than her mother, he was now an old man. Some years before this he had married a young wife, by whom he had several daughters and one son. The thought of this son suddenly raised Lady Castleton's drooping spirits. He could not be much younger than Marion. She would throw herself upon her uncle's compassion. She had been shamefully treated by Mr. Carlyle. Both Marion and herself were victims.

If nothing came of it, at any rate it would give breathing time for future consideration. Lady Castleton determined, if possible, not to leave Powdridge Court the next day, but if she had to do so it might have its advantages; though it would not give her time for writing to her uncle, it would add to her claim upon his hospitality, that she was actually turned out of the house. Lady Castleton knew nothing of Mrs. Stapleton, and feeling it would be best to be provided against all possible contingencies, she went into her daughter's room. There upon the table lay the various handsome presents Marion from time to time had received from Mr. Carlyle. Surveying them with greedy eyes, she finally selected a diamond bracelet and an Indian shawl. If necessary, she could raise a handsome sum upon them; if unnecessary, they

could be returned at some future time. Lady Castleton carried them off into her own room, and, returning to her daughter's, she re-arranged the table, throwing a cover over it, and trusting to the bustle of the morning preventing any one's perceiving there were things missing. The only person she really feared was Marion; it was not at all likely that Mrs. Sykes should know all that had been given.

It was five o'clock before Lady Castleton lay down in her bed, which she did more for the sake of appearance than from any expectation of rest; her mind continued far too busy, no sleep came near her, so that it was a positive relief when the maid brought hot water in the morning, and put an end to the farce of repose.

Jane Cleaver waited upon both Lady Castleton and Marion, and she now brought a message from Mrs. Sykes, "requesting to know at what hour her ladyship would like to have the carriage?"

This question made Lady Castleton shiver. It told her that the whole household knew she was to go, but she answered it by saying she should be glad to speak to Mrs. Sykes, if she would be good enough to come to her now.

Mrs. Sykes soon made her appearance. A single glance at her countenance told Lady

Castleton there was nothing to be gained in that quarter, but she received her very graciously, and said, "That she had not meant to have left for a day or two longer; she did not know if there would be any difficulty in her remaining on. Could the matter rest until she had spoken to Mr. Carlyle?"

"My master is not yet up, he is never called, and no one goes near him until he makes his appearance; when that may be is quite uncertain?"

"I would not have him disturbed on any account," said Lady Castleton; "but perhaps I could remain, and settle afterwards about the carriage. I am sure he would be glad to accommodate me."

"I had my orders last night, my lady. It is my business to carry them out; I never disobey my master."

"Of course not; but I thought there might be some misunderstanding. The last time I saw Mr. Carlyle, I knew it was settled we should leave the day after to-morrow."

"I do not think there is any mistake," replied Mrs. Sykes, in a most determined manner. "Shall I order the carriage at eleven o'clock?"

"Thank you; that will do nicely," replied Lady Castleton, checkmated.

Mrs. Sykes was withdrawing when Lady Castleton called her back, and said :

"Upon the table in my daughter's room, you will find some things which she wishes to be given to Mr. Carlyle, after our departure. Be so kind as to remove them while we are at breakfast, that there may be no confusion afterwards."

"Very well, my lady," was Mrs. Sykes's reply, adding to herself when the door was closed : "I will take precious good care they are under lock and key before you leave, madam."

At half-past eleven, Mr. Carlyle's carriage drove through the gates of the park, conveying Lady Castleton and Marion to the railway station. Their luggage was to follow them, and to be left at the principal inn in the village near Mr. Stapleton's residence.

CHAPTER VII.

IS IT TRUE?

PUBLIC opinion was greatly excited the morning after the party at Moorton Manor by the intelligence which flew through the neighbourhood like lightning, of what had taken place at Powdridge Court. Every possible and impossible detail was repeated in full faith, and the most minute circumstances added, which, if they had really occurred, could by no possibility have been known by those who circulated them.

It startled the Vicar while finishing his sermon. Lucy came into his room with such a look of alarm upon her face, that her brother eagerly asked what had occasioned it. But, upon hearing the cause, the whole thing seemed so improbable, that after a little consideration they agreed to consider it as an idle rumour, without further confirmation.

“Indeed, my dear Lucy, you may be sure it

is just one of those mischievous reports, which are one of the nuisances of life. We saw them ourselves only last night on the best possible terms. There has been no time for the development of such a scandal, and really I do not think it fair to Miss Castleton to believe it. I am sure Mr. Wymerly was anything but overpolite to her. He left her in the middle of the ball-room in a way I thought quite rude. In fact his manners last night were not what I should have expected. I think he owed it to Miss Moorton to have remained longer, after all the attention he has received from her and Mr. Trevor. I am sure she thought his conduct very odd."

"Yes, Tom; no doubt it was very odd, but it appears to me to be still odder, what can have set such a rumour going."

The front door bell now rang, and a minute after Mr. Trevor was shown into the study. Lucy withdrew, and after she had left, Mr. Trevor made some trifling remark about the weather, and then said:

"I have called early; but it was not to talk about trifles. There's an ugly story going about. I should like to be able to contradict it, both for the sake of your brother and Mr. Wymerly. You know to what I allude?"

The Vicar felt thunderstruck, and without directly answering the question, remarked that it did not do to believe mere rumours ; to what did Mr. Trevor refer ?

“ I hope it may only be idle gossip. We must make allowance for electioneering times, but it is said that Wymerly has lost not only his election, but his bride.”

Here Mr. Trevor paused, and looked at the Vicar.

“ Well ?”

“ I had better tell you the plain truth,” said Mr. Trevor, “ there is no good beating about the bush in these matters. It is also said that owing to this, Lady Castleton and her daughter have suddenly left Powdridge Court ; and that your brother has broken off his engagement to Miss Castleton.”

“ May I ask, sir, from whom you have heard this ?”

“ I heard it through the servants, in the first instance ; but since then, as I was coming here, I met Markham, who was returning from the station, and he saw the two ladies take their seats in a second-class carriage, which struck him as odd. He said your brother was not there ; and when he was outside the station, there was quite a group round the carriage. The

servants were laughing and talking so loud, that he asked the station-master what was going on, who told him just what I have repeated to you."

"It's very strange," said the Vicar. "I don't understand it. I had heard the rumour, but thought it must be impossible."

"Making every allowance for the way in which servants read their masters' actions," said Mr. Trevor, "it still looks as if something had happened unexpected. I will not repeat the things that were said about both your brother and Mr. Wymerly. I should be very sorry to believe them; and dirt once thrown upon any one's character, seems to remain there, in spite of any amount of contradiction. I will not spread it."

As it was evident no information was to be gained from the Vicar, Mr. Trevor turned the conversation, and sat on some time longer chatting. Amongst other things he said that his stay at Moorton Manor was nearly ended, that his daughter was going to pay visits at various friends' houses; and that Mrs. Trevor and himself were thinking of going abroad for a couple of months. "We are trying to persuade Miss Moorton to come with us; she is not altogether disinclined. I hope she may do so before settling down for the winter."

After Mr. Trevor's departure, the Vicar found it impossible any longer even to pretend to finish his sermon. Was it true there was something between Miss Castleton and Mr. Wymerly? Then he was no longer a rival at Moorton Manor. But then his brother? Could it be possible his marriage had come to an end? And as the Vicar thought over all that Lucy had said and written about Miss Castleton's frame of mind, the probability that such was the fact grew stronger and stronger. Mr. Tom Carlyle had never before felt so cordially towards Mr. Wymerly as he did now. It was true he had always disliked the engagement. A match between May and December appeared to him in itself as a tragedy. To others, it might be a comedy, but to the pure simple-minded Vicar, it was a horrible sacrifice of youth at the altar of wealth and position. However much he felt sorry for his brother, he could not but in his heart rejoice at what he looked upon as Marion's escape. And if to that was added a secret attachment between her and Mr. Wymerly, it was quite impossible for him not to rejoice at such a triumph of love's power over worldly ambition.

His own devotion to Miss Moorton enabled him to give a different reading to what he had looked upon as the very ungentlemanly way in

which Miss Castleton had been left in the ball-room by Mr. Wymerly, and his heart warmed towards him as he placed himself in a similar position, and thought what his own feelings would have been. All Mr. Wymerly's good conduct was now in the ascendant; he had been as good as his word about the carving for the pulpit, and that which had formerly appeared as dangerous usefulness, now stood out as disinterested kindness. Through Mr. Wymerly's assistance, the work had been undertaken by a firm in Belgium, and its completion might be looked for, before the winter. And this had been done by the man to whose advent into his parish he had looked forward with unmixed dislike. He could not be altogether bad, since he was not in love with Miss Moorton. The Vicar's spirits rose—asceticism was to-day a long way behind. Perhaps, in time, if he was sufficiently earnest and conciliatory, he might even bring the unbeliever into the Christian fold. Mixed with the joy of believing that Miss Moorton was unsought, by Mr. Wymerly, it was a heavy drawback that she was going away for two months. This intelligence fell like lead upon his heart. She seemed to have been in the neighbourhood such a very short time, and now to be off again—not to see her for two

whole months, during all which time she would be exposed to the greedy eyes of all the men she came across. It was hard—it was very hard! The one joy of his life, that he might not at least see every week from the pulpit! But life was hard, especially to a poor vicar, who had to set an example of all the virtues. To practise as well as preach that virtue was its own reward, while knowing how far, far off he was from even feeling it to be so!

Mr. Tom Carlyle was roused from his dreaming by the arrival of one of his churchwardens upon business. It was a piece of perfectly uninteresting routine work that he came about; but the Vicar was smitten by remorse for the disgust with which he turned to the plain fare—the dry bread—of the cure to which all his strength ought to be given.

Before the man took his leave, he said that he feared the election had done a deal of mischief.

“I don’t say who’s brought them down, sir—whether it’s the one side or the other; but there are a lot of people skulking about I never see in these parts afore. A real nasty lot they look, and I hear there’ll be a good many more fires this autumn than that one at Markham’s, as soon as the harvest’s in. You know, sir, that one was never rightly explained; and my old

woman says (she's a fool, sir, but yet she comes very nigh the truth sometimes)—she says she knows there was more in it than we think for."

"Perhaps your wife may be right," said the Vicar; "but I believe the police made every inquiry. I do not know what more could have been done."

"Well, I don't know neither; but I don't think the police are much good. It's said, too, that some of these rascally chaps are just laying their plans, and that there'll be a regular raid upon the preserves as soon as the shooting begins."

"That's very serious; I hope it is not true. There's not much preserving about here."

"Not so much as in some places, maybe; but Mr. Appleton preserves pretty close—and, for that matter, so does your brother, sir, although he thinks he doesn't; but the agent often does a deal more than his employer knows; and, if I am not much mistaken, Mr. Markham likes a good bit of shooting as well as any one. Altogether, there's a very pretty picking to be had round about here, by those who know where to look for it. But I guess some of them will be disappointed this year, if all's true that's said."

This churchwarden, who was the principal draper in Nunneley, here took his leave, and

the Vicar, putting on his hat, went out. He was greatly annoyed by what the man had said. He knew only too well what an attraction poaching was to all the idle fellows in a village. Some very bad cases had already happened; and that there were a number of new faces hanging about the neighbourhood was only too evident. What was to be done? Here was he, the shepherd of a flock, placed in his position to lead on to better things those under his charge; but he felt much more like the sheep dog, unable to prevent the sheep straying in all directions, than like the master of the flock, dog and all. How was it that people were so idle and wicked, when every Sunday they had the best advice he could give them, and repeated all the beautiful prayers which were read to them with all the fervour of conviction? Was the devil to have it all his own way, and the good intentions of the few to remain powerless over the sins of the many? It was very disheartening—and still more so the Vicar's growing perception of the great increase of unbelief. It was hard to reach the sinner—but oh! how much harder to teach the infidel! The Vicar had always been in favour of education; but it came over him now, with a cold shudder, that it was the educated men who were the worst unbelievers; and if

that was so—if education ended in infidelity—let all knowledge perish, before such a source of eternal perdition was put into the hands of suffering, unhappy ignorance.

“What consolation is there for the poor but the promises of the Gospel?” was his silent exclamation. “But yet, how can they be raised above their present grovelling misery, except by giving them higher thoughts and nobler interests?”

Mr. Carlyle took a long walk, pondering all these things, and returned with only one settled determination, and that was to call the following day at Moorton Manor. It was the right thing to do, anyhow, and if they were all going away so soon all the more imperative, that he might learn from Miss Moorton how she would like various things in which she took an active part, conducted during her absence.

The next morning's post brought a letter from Powdridge Court to Lucy. It was as follows :

“MY DEAR LUCY,

“If you have not already heard it, I tell you, and you will tell Tom, that my intended marriage is at an end. I request that neither of you ever mention the subject to me again.

I shall never now marry, and I shall be glad if you could look upon my house as your permanent home—of course, that is, until you marry.

“I hope Tom will not think I am asking too much in taking you away from him, but of course he will marry, clergymen ought to do so, to have wives and families of their own. He is much younger than I am, and of course looks forward to doing so. If he feels that his income is unequal to such an increase of expenditure, tell him, when the right person comes in his way, not to hesitate on that account. I shall be ready to give him whatever is necessary. The sooner you come the better for me.

“Your affectionate brother,

“STAFFORD C.”

After reading this letter, Lucy handed it to her brother, who, as he read the latter part, blushed up to the roots of his hair, and bent his head over the letter to recover his equanimity, long after he had concluded its perusal. “Was it then actually possible? did Stafford suspect anything? Could it ever really happen?” were the thoughts which shot through his mind when he returned the letter to his sister.

Lucy looked at him, surprised at his height-

ened colour, which she attributed to annoyance at the prospect of losing her, so she said :

“ Oh, dear Tom, how can I leave you ? ”

“ I don't know, Lucy, I shall miss you sadly,” replied the Vicar, with considerable abstraction ; then added : “ Don't you think that letter is very unlike one of Stafford's ? ”

“ I was just thinking so, Tom. It makes me horridly sorry for him ; something very bad must have happened ; but, do you know, I am hardly surprised, Miss Castleton was so odd sometimes, as I told you, if you remember ? ”

“ I remember it well, Lucy, and, though I can't say I am sorry the match is at an end, I regret more than before that it should ever have been proposed.”

“ Yes, indeed,” said Lucy. “ Poor old Stafford ! It's not like him to write in such a subdued style. It's very kind, but very funny about you, Tom ; where on earth are you to meet with your bride, unless you make up to Miss Trevor ? Eh, Tom, will that suit you ? ”

“ Tom ” winced at this remark. Then even to his sister, who was so fond of him, the thing seemed out of the question. But he said, with a forced laugh :

“ No, Lucy, I do not think that will quite do, but there are other young ladies round here.”

"Yes, of course, but not good enough for you, Tom dear; when you do marry, you must have a real beauty, or I shall not give my consent," said Lucy, getting up and kissing him.

"Thank you, dear, but I have no chance," replied her brother, with such a deep sigh, that Lucy said:

"Why, Tom, one would think you were in love, were it not impossible."

"Whether you stay permanently or no, you must go now," said the Vicar, changing the subject abruptly; "but I think to-morrow will be soon enough."

"I could not possibly go before, and I can't bear going then," said Lucy, "nor would I leave you again when I have been so much away from you, were it not for this most unpleasant affair. I should like to know what it all means, shouldn't you, Tom?"

"Yes, I should; but we shall know in time; these things are sure to come out. I dare say Stafford will tell you himself some day, and probably you will have learnt all about it long before from Mrs. Sykes."

"Ah, to be sure," said Lucy, "she will be certain to know."

"I am going up to the Manor House this

morning, Lucy ; they are all soon going away. If I am asked to lunch I shall stay, so do not wait for me should I not return in time for dinner," said the Vicar, as he rose to leave the room.

"Oh, Tom, I should like to come too ; may I?"

"You must call there, of course, but that should be later in the day. I am going early to see Miss Moorton on business."

"What a plague business is ! I should have liked the walk with you so much."

"So should I, otherwise, but it cannot be to-day," replied the Vicar, quickly making his escape.

Mr. Wymerly's early disappearance on the night of the party had excited no little comment ; not that it had been discovered nearly as soon as it occurred. The house and grounds were so large that his absence from the gallery where the dancing took place was nothing ; he might have been in many other places. But when Cecilia and Helen began to discuss the small details of the evening, and found that he had not asked either of them to dance, neither had he been seen by either of them after quite an early hour, Helen expressed superfluous displeasure, after the fashion of young ladies, at

his want of polite attention to those who had taken so much trouble for him. "Really, men are the most unsatisfactory things in creation; they'll take everything from you, and consider they've fulfilled their part in accepting what is offered them; but as to any return of even ordinary politeness, you need not look for that. Now the truth is, Cecy, I meant to dance with Mr. Wymerly; he looks as if he would dance well, and I believe Miss Castleton was the only lady whose hand he deigned to demand."

"He could not help himself there, Helen. Mr. Trevor told him to dance with her, and I must say, for your consolation, I never saw two people who seemed more stiff and awkward together. As to their being old acquaintances, it's ridiculous. They had nothing to say, and stood the greater part of the quadrille absolutely without speaking."

"Oh, you wanted to know whether she was his old love, did you?" said Helen, maliciously.

"I was standing opposite, you know perfectly well, and could not avoid seeing how they behaved."

This conversation took place at the breakfast-table, and Helen's sharp reply, which was quivering on her tongue, was unable to take effect, by the entrance of Mr. Trevor. The two

girls rose to greet him, which no sooner was accomplished than he said, "I hope you are already fortified, for I have some astounding news for you;" and then proceeded to tell them what was reported about the new member and his intended bride.

The girls looked at one another with unfeigned surprise. Cecilia remarked, "But are you sure it's true?"

Helen said, "I'm uncommonly glad Mr. Carlyle is not to have everything his own way."

"Little mischief," said her father; "but this really is no joking matter."

"No," remarked Mrs. Trevor; "but it is vain to hope that Helen will ever learn to look upon things as she ought to do."

"Well, well," said Mr. Trevor, "I own this news took my own breath away somewhat, and you can't expect grey heads upon green shoulders."

"Thank you, papa, but my shoulders are white."

"There, Mr. Trevor, you see what encouraging her leads to."

"Oh no, mamma. Papa has not the least idea of the good he does me. I should be ten times worse unless he allowed me to speak out."

At this remark Mrs. Trevor looked so dis-

pleased that Cecilia hastened to say, "I wonder whether Mr. Tom Carlyle knows about it? What a very unpleasant thing for him."

"I will go down there and find out," said Mr. Trevor, and thus it was that he paid his call on the Vicar.

The following morning Helen was in the garden, gathering flowers, Cecilia having gone out early to see the Wilsons. The old man had never been able to do work again, but he still existed, basking in the sunshine before his cottage door, in fine weather, and huddled up before the fire when the weather was wet or cold. He was almost entirely supported now by Cecilia. He was so helpless that his wife could rarely leave him for a whole day, so that her earnings amounted to very little. The only alternative before him was the Union, and such was his horror of it, that Cecilia had told his wife she was never in any way to allude to it to him, that he should never want as long as he lived; and now that there was a prospect of her being absent for perhaps two months, Cecilia had gone down to make the necessary arrangements for securing this, while she was away.

As she returned she met the Vicar at the Park gate, and they walked up to the house together. After the first greetings, he said, "I

am fortunate in meeting you. I came at this early hour hoping to catch you before you had gone out. I hear you are leaving soon, and I wanted to ask you what arrangements you wished made for the Mechanics' Institute during the autumn and winter."

"I am very glad you have reminded me. My thoughts have been so occupied by the election, these small interests have quite gone into the background. I've just come from old Wilson. He is very feeble, I do not think he can last long; what a shocking thing that was."

"Indeed yes; and next summer we shall have that man out again, and what to do with him and the other idle fellows of the parish is quite overwhelming. They don't come to church, they are never at home when I call, and how to get hold of them is one of my greatest difficulties."

"If they were to come to church," said Cecilia, "do you think it would make much difference?"

The Vicar looked hard at her. "Do you really mean that you think it would not?"

"I mean," said Cecilia, without noticing the look he had given her, "that if I were a poor ignorant man, that I should not be contented to be poor and ignorant because I was told to

be contented with the station in which I had been placed."

"Good Heavens!" said the astounded Vicar, "but that would be upsetting everything that God has willed."

"Do I hurt you," said Cecilia, struck by the pain in his voice. "I am sorry if I do, but it seems to me so much that is preached to the poor never reaches home to them, because it is so untrue. If I put myself into a poor man's place, I should hate and scorn those, who, comfortably placed themselves, expected me to exercise every virtue, in a state of abject misery; and I should feel all the more angry if they showed me they always expected me to continue as I was."

"I do not see how you or I can alter the poor man's place, and certainly he was not placed in it by either of us."

"But do we not help to keep him down? Do we not believe, and act in the belief, that it is all right that he should be as he is?"

"You, especially, in preventing Wilson's going to the Workhouse, and in helping me whenever I have mentioned any way by which the education or amusements of the people might be raised."

"Oh, I do not refer to such trifles, but I am

perplexed and bothered between what is and what should be. I really do not see my way between the disgust I feel at the life and occupations of the poor people; the duty I feel it to be to try and raise them out of it; the conviction that it is impossible to do so; and the sense not only of its being right, but an absolute necessity to submit to, and accept your lot, whatever it may be. I cannot in my conscience tell a poor man or woman that he or she ought to be contented and cheerful, when pretty nearly everything in their position is against them. I beg your pardon Mr. Carlyle, I am afraid I have said what I ought not to have said to you; but these subjects have been brought before me lately so vividly, by various things that have happened through the election, and most especially by conversations that I have listened to between papa, Mr. Summers, and Mr. Wymerly, that they have seldom been out of my head, and I spoke to you without consideration."

"Unless you consider me entirely unworthy of the position I hold, I cannot imagine why you should apologise."

"I feared I had shocked you."

This was true, but the Vicar, making a great effort of self-control, replied :

"It is my own incompetence that shocks me.

I ought only to be glad that you do speak to me."

"Thank you very much. I have heard so little that gave me satisfaction. Every one seems to feel the difficulties, no one to be able to suggest the remedies ; and all the while we are talking and talking, the condition of the poor remains as bad, or worse, than before. Do tell me how we are to recencile submission and trust, with the disgust which produces improvement ? Mr. Wymerly seems to think that everything depends upon man, and is to be done by him, and that we are answerable for the present state of our populations."

"Answerable to whom ?"

"I really don't know."

"I imagine he would tell you that it is to a man's own sense of right, to his wish for the progress of humanity ; but what sort of an answer is that, when a man or woman is wrapt up in self ; when their only desire is for their own worldly advancement ; when they have no conscience about what is outside their own small interests ; the progress of humanity under the influence and action of ordinary men and women would soon be purely retrograde."

"But Mr. Wymerly thinks the world is to be

influenced by its great men ; they are to lead the little ones."

"And how do they set about it?" said the Vicar in a tone he did his best not to make bitter. "By denying the existence of any morally governing power ; and destroying all hope of an immortality which may continue the education which is left so incomplete in this life, as well as explain and reconcile the difficulties and apparent hardships in the lot of so large a number of their fellow creatures. And it is these men who believe in nothing but themselves, who would give the franchise to our ignorant populations, and try to make them believe that man is the highest being existing."

"But supposing it is true," said Cecilia in a low voice.

"How can it be true, Miss Moorton?" said the Vicar, now really excited. "Just conceive the result. These men, like all other kinds of autocrats, preach obedience to *their* will, but will the people submit to them more than they would to Louis XVI.? Will they be slow to learn? Yes, slow, perhaps, but they will learn their own power as a part of the highest creation ; that lesson once learnt, the next step is a revolution, the rule of mob-law ; the rule that suits the inclinations of the bigger part of

the highest thing existent. Those who have taught them this lesson would be soon overthrown. Their moral law would be too exalted for the lower members of humanity, whose moral law would send the world back some hundred years."

There was a pause, during which the Vicar and Cecilia walked silently side by side, each busily engaged with their own thoughts, until the former said :

"Now I must ask you to excuse my vehemence, and pray tell me what are *your* wishes? what is your moral law for the improvement of the parish while you are away?"

"I never felt more humble in my life than at this minute," said Cecilia. "The only moral law I can think of is, to give you *carte blanche* upon my purse for any sums you may require : either for lecturers and amusements at the institute, or for charitable purposes. I feel ashamed to go away for more amusement, and leave you to do all the work here alone."

"It is my business, and most especially my privilege, when the little I can do is approved and assisted by you."

"I wish with all my heart I could do more."

"There is one thing I should like to ask. While you are absent, may the people have a

day in Moorton Park? They do badly want a counter attraction to the ale-house."

"I am so glad you've mentioned it! Do whatever you like. Would it not be a good thing to open it once a week while the weather remains fine?"

"I am not quite sure. I should wish it to be the highest treat to go there; but I will consider it."

Cecilia asked the Vicar to come in to luncheon, but he excused himself, and said he would call again before they left. He was too much roused by what had passed between them to be able to stay and talk upon indifferent matters; and as he walked away, his mind was full of thankfulness that for the next two months at least, Cecilia would be removed from Mr. Wymerly's influence.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUMMER NIGHT'S RIDE.

No one would have felt inclined to envy Mr. Wymerly the feelings with which he mounted his horse, and rode away from Moorton Manor. Never more than now, when they were finally separated, had he felt the force of that which in Marion's being had originally attracted him towards her. Though desperately angry with her, he loved her better than ever; and while all the "seven devils" of disappointed hopes and outraged affections ran riot in his heart, he yet found himself making excuses for the weakness of her conduct, for which he was surprised and provoked with himself. As they had stood side by side in the quadrille, and every word he had addressed to her had contained an undercurrent of contempt and disgust, he still could have thrown himself at her feet to beg forgiveness for

such brutishness, and to entreat her not to throw away her young affections as she was intending to do.

He had left the picture-gallery so profoundly irritated that every place seemed too small for him. He felt suffocated, and that it could only be outside all walls that there could be sufficient space either to move or breathe. Once in the saddle, he rode on and on, taking every fresh turn in the road, utterly regardless whether it led to, or from, Wharton House.

After a time this continuous rapid motion gave some relief to the physical irritation under which he was labouring, but the beginning of exhaustion only gave more power to the entire hopelessness of his feelings. This then was the good he had gained by becoming his cousin's heir (he forgot that Marion's mother had rejected him before that had happened), to see the woman he loved won by another, who also stood in the way of all the plans he had formed of future usefulness and ambition. It would have been a great relief to Mr. Wymerly to have been able to send a challenge to Mr. Carlyle, but as civilisation has vetoed that method of venting our spleen, and as even if it had not done so, there really was no possible excuse for exercising it on the present occasion,

there was nothing to be done but to ride on and on, until the poor beast that carried him stood still of itself, trembling with heat and fatigue. This cessation of movement on the part of his horse brought Mr. Wymerly to his senses. He pulled out his watch, it was just six, it was broad daylight, and where was he?

That was a question more easily asked than answered. He had not the least idea. He had wandered far beyond his knowledge of the neighbourhood, his horse was done up, and there was not a building to be seen, nothing but fields, and trees, and hedges, and a little further on, the beginning of a very extensive bit of woodland.

Here for the first time since he had mounted his horse Mr. Wymerly breathed at ease. "Thank goodness there is neither man nor woman here," was his mental ejaculation, as he looked round, and then got off the poor weary beast that had carried him. Finding him really much distressed, Mr. Wymerly led him slowly along the road, looking out for water. As he neared the wood, he saw within it the bright sparkle of what he sought, and entering through a gap in the hedge, it was not long before both master and horse were refreshing themselves with the welcome fluid. The solitude was so entire that

Mr. Wymerly determined to have the benefit of it before returning to the complications of human society. So loosening the harness of his horse, he tethered it with its bridle to a tree, and then sought a soft leafy bottom on which to throw himself.

It was not difficult to find one, and once there, it was not long before the perfect stillness around him, and the fresh air, produced their natural results, and Mr. Wymerly fell sound asleep.

When he awoke, it was far on in the day. He felt ravenously hungry, and his horse had disappeared; so he thought some communication with his fellow beings, in spite of all their defects, might be conducive to comfort, and springing up, he looked everywhere for the missing steed. It was not far to find; the thick underwood had prevented its straying any distance, and soon Mr. Wymerly was out of the wood, considering in which direction to turn in order to reach home. He had so completely lost his way that the endeavour to recover it kept his mind fully occupied, leaving no time for the weary hopelessness of the preceding night. This necessity for exertion did him real service; and after various mistakes and taking wrong turnings, he at last perceived the tops of the

houses in Sheredale. Once there his way was clear, but he stopped there first for refreshment to man and beast, and it was not till nearly eight in the evening that he rode up to his front door, to the great surprise of his servants, who had been much exercised in their minds as to where master could be, why he did not return, and whether they ought to go and look after him,

Upon the table in the hall there was lying a telegram. It had arrived that morning, but there was no one to open it. Mr. Wymerly hastily read it, and found it came from a younger brother of Mr. Summers, with whom he had been intimate at college. It contained these words—

“Hearty congratulations that you are still free. Off to-morrow; where? Meet me at Dover? Together?”

This laconic invitation was a perfect godsend to Mr. Wymerly. He determined at once to join his friend. But there was no time to be lost. He must take the first train the next morning in order to reach Dover the same day, and then how was he to find Mr. Summers out? No hotel was mentioned. “So like him, the careless fellow; but probably the ‘Lord Warden’ will settle that matter—he most likely

thinks that is Dover." So telling his servant to pack up his clothes, and making the other necessary arrangements for his absence, Mr. Wymerly, before turning in for a few hours' sleep, proceeded to take a final survey of the new rooms in his house. If he had gained his election, he intended to have had a grand house-warming entertainment, which was to have been followed up by furnishing the new rooms for the woman he hoped to have placed there as mistress ; but as matters had turned now he walked through the large empty rooms with a kind of savage satisfaction at their bareness. At least here nothing had been attempted without succeeding, and if they never were to have a mistress he could receive his friends in them without one.

The following evening found the two friends discussing a late dinner, and what they should do together at Dover. It was the greatest relief to Mr. Wymerly to be with any one who was altogether unconnected with the events of the past weeks, and knew absolutely nothing of any of his past relations with Lady Castleton and her daughter. He had passed into an entirely different world—one where high spirits reigned, and every thing that happened—good, bad, or indifferent—was looked upon as so much added enjoyment.

Mr. Frank Summers had not yet entered upon the perilous path of reforming the world. He found it a very good place, and could not imagine why every one else should not do the same. On the present occasion, with fifty pounds in his pocket (a present from his godfather), he had determined to make the most of the vacation, and go and see the world.

"I haven't the remotest idea how far it will take me; but if some day I find it all gone, I shall just write home, and tell my father so; and, you know, he could not leave me stranded, he must bring me back."

"Your governor must be uncommonly good-natured, if he'll stand that sort of thing."

"I don't see it; he ought to have sent me abroad before this, and hasn't done it; so, if nearly all my expenses are paid by my godfather, and he merely has to bring me away from somewhere, he's nothing to growl at, and may think himself very fortunate."

"But if he were to refuse?"

"I've no fears; my mother could not do without me beyond a limited time; besides which, you know, it is merely a trifle I may have to ask for."

"I should say that depended upon where we may be."

"Not at all; I can walk to any extent. I've made up my mind that all I'll ask for will be five pounds. With that I'll undertake to return to old England from anywhere. And, don't you see, that's the way to really enjoy yourself? As long as my money lasts, I shall spend it without any bother about the future; when it is gone, wherever I am, I stay until I receive my five pounds—then I walk back, living on bread and beer. Nothing can be simpler? *Vogue la galère.*"

"'Bread and beer'—which?—Bass's pale ale, or Burton's stout? You will require some miraculous intervention to meet with either of those abroad, at prices which such a millionaire as you could afford."

"Very well, then; I'll drink water—it's all one—it's very easy."

"Glad to hear it. It's all one to me, for there's nothing I should like better than a walking expedition."

"By Jove!—then let's start on foot."

"Don't you think we'd better cross the Hellespont first?"

"Now there's an idea! Let's go to Constantinople."

"Too far; we should only get as far as the mountains before the cold sets in, and then we should get snowed up."

"Then let's walk to the Blue Danube, and float down it on a raft; that must be cheap."

"But are there rafts on which we could go?"

"Oh, there must be; that's the way all foreign timber is carried. I should take that for granted."

"Very pleasant to take every thing for granted that we wish to have."

"My dear fellow, it's the only way to live; and I've always observed that those who do so always find what they want."

"That's a truly comfortable theory; but I think a raft would be somewhat tedious, and might want to stop where we did not; and might get ducked by the steamers in a way that would be better for the planks than for us."

"Well, if you don't like any of my plans, suggest one for yourself."

"I'm quite willing to walk with you to the Danube, if you like; but, now I've the chance of your companionship, I should uncommonly like to go up the Nile; and, if you go there to please me, you understand the expense is mine."

"What a heavenly project! I should like it of all things. Now didn't I say so, just now?"

"Say what?"

"That if you took things for granted, you were sure to get what you wanted. But mind,

my fifty pounds goes into the common fund, and that I am to walk back."

"That wouldn't suit me at all, for then I should have to return alone. I'll not undertake to walk here from Egypt."

Frank Summers was silent for a minute, and then said :

"I'm afraid I've been uncommonly cool ; it's awfully good of you to make the proposition, but, on second thoughts, I don't think I ought to accept it."

"It will be the kindest thing you can do, old fellow. I've been down in the country, until I want a regular shaking up, and I know no one I should so much like to go with as you."

"Well, really, I feel infinitely obliged to you. I shall be delighted to go, but mind, when you are tired of me, you'll just throw me overboard."

"Oh, I shall be quite ready to do so ; it's a bargain then. Suppose we find out now when the boat starts in the morning ?"

Upon inquiry, they heard that a steamer would cross about ten o'clock that evening, and having nothing to detain them at Dover, they collected their goods, and went on board shortly after, thinking they could settle their future plans better when they were once on foreign soil.

The passage over was as uneventful as such

passages usually are, and in the course of it they settled, as Frank Summers' time was limited, to go as fast as they could to Basle. From there they would pass over the St. Gothard down on to the Italian lakes, either faster or slower as it suited their inclinations. If they were satisfied, they would enjoy themselves leisurely, perhaps even leave out the Nile for another time, but if they found themselves *ennuyés*, and Europe too *bornée* for their ambitions, they would hasten to leave it, and find something more exciting in another continent.

It was the first time that Frank had been abroad, and his delight at finding himself there, and his amusement at everything he saw, literally knew no bounds, and added immensely to the pleasure of his society. It greatly helped Mr. Wymerly to throw off the weight of his disappointments, and to enjoy himself in spite of a lost election, and a lost bride.

Arrived at Basle, they were so tired they determined to stay there one whole day, in the course of which it occurred to Mr. Wymerly, for the first time, that his conduct at Moorton Manor, and subsequent departure without calling there, was not the politest way of treating those who had shown him every politeness, and had been of the greatest use to him in the elec-

tion. To what could they possibly attribute his behaviour, except to a degree of rudeness which it mortified him to think about? He had no idea that any one, with the exception of the parties immediately concerned, knew anything about his previous acquaintance with the Castletons, and he flattered himself that the way in which he had accepted a new introduction to, and had then danced with Miss Castleton, would prevent any one ever doing so. Upon his own head entirely then must fall the weight of his want of manners, so he determined, without further delay, to write a note of explanation and apology. "He had been summoned suddenly to join a friend; very much regretted being unable to call before leaving," and if he wound up with a neatly-turned phrase of gratitude for past kindnesses, it would put matters straight, without there being anything in the cause assigned for his leaving that could in any way compromise him. It must be remembered that his sudden departure had left him in entire ignorance of the *dénouement* at Powdrige Court. He believed that the next thing he should hear about Marion would be the completion of her marriage.

Having told Frank Summers that he must write a letter, that young gentleman replied :

"All right, then so will I. I promised my blessed mother to keep her *au courant* with my adventures, as she expects me to be killed half-a-dozen times before I return home ; and so, as 'soonest begun soonest ended,' I'll disappear, and make short work of her, and myself too."

The letter which Frank wrote, was as follows :

"DEAR OLD LADY,

"You must promise to receive as gospel every word I write. I could not stand the least unbelief. Our passage was short, but full of events, too long, however, to relate. Oh, I see I have already omitted that Wymerly turned up all right, which will be, I know, a great consolation to you, and all the more when I tell you that his face has grown two inches longer since we last met. It is evident he 'has a secret sorrow of his own,' what it is, of course I don't inquire, but under its blighting influence he will be all the more fit to hold your harum-scarum offspring in check. So much for him ; now to facts. Facts, my dear mother, are the salt of the earth, and not unfrequently melt away in just the same way.

"*Imprimis.* Upon nearing the French coast, without waiting for the placing of the

gangway, I jumped ashore ; and having done so without wetting my socks, I assure you, if you had felt them, they were quite dry. Being naturally elated by such a successful feat, I began to whistle, when suddenly a little dwarf, dressed in regimentals, confronted me, and in a voice of thunder called out, '*Silence ! il est défendu de siffler ici.*' I pretended not to understand him, and relying upon the English reputation for wanting to dine under all circumstances, I thought to show my submission by saying with that smile of mine you know so well, '*Plait-il ?*' But instead of giving me one, he added in a still more ferocious manner, '*L'Empereur ne le permet.*' Now that I thought was too ill-natured of Boney, which, I suppose, was too evident on my expressive countenance, for he instantly drew his sword and flourished it above my head. Of course this action roused all the lion within me, and what would have been the consequences I leave you to guess, but at that moment another dwarf tapped me on the shoulder, and said, 'Coom alon, your kayes, sare,' and turning round I saw Wymerly a mile ahead ; so I ran after him as fast as I could, thinking how very polite French thieves were, to ask you for your keys when they meant to rob you.

“The dwarf still followed me, but at a respectful distance, until we approached a small building, when he ran up again, and pointing to it, said, ‘Thare, thare!’ Wymerly, being used to these strange people, went quietly in, and I followed to see what was the fun, when imagine my sensations upon being seized roughly by two powerful beings, and thrust *instantly* into a large sack, which they proceeded to shake violently up and down.

“Fortunately my head remained uppermost, and after continuing this pretty play some little time, they let the sack down, so that I once more felt my feet on the ground. They then nodded significantly to one another, saying, ‘No jingle, notin thare,’ and went away. You may imagine how soon I left the sack. At the door I met Wymerly, who had just undergone the same treatment. He seemed so amused at my surprise, that I rather kept it to myself; afterwards I learnt this was the method in general use for searching if travellers carry anything contraband.

“Ladies, I hear, are swung in a blanket. After this exercise, feeling very hungry, we found an hotel, and ordered breakfast, for which they brought us slices of cold ham, and a bottle of wine, some sugar, and *petits pains*. Only

think of that being the food for a starving Britisher.

“ ‘I wept, as I thought of the sideboard at home.’

“ Wymerly told me I was a horrid John Bull ; that it was a very good breakfast, and if I would only try it I should think so too. Well, I did try it, and before long there was nothing on the table but empty dishes ; and I’m bound to say that it most effectually prevented my having any desire to eat again for a long long time.

“ We next proceeded to the railway station, and took our places for Cologne, meaning not to stop again until we saw the Rhine. The carriage was stuffed quite full, containing six people besides ourselves, a papa, and a mamma, and three daughters ; and a big man who seemed to belong nowhere, but to be living about the world. He had terrible eyes, a moustache as long as Pussy’s whiskers, waxed finely, a large beard, and a loud voice. He gave us a great deal of information as soon as he discovered we were travelling for pleasure, and should perhaps reach the Nile. Wymerly said I behaved very badly, but his remarks produced such an effect upon the young ladies, one of whom, by the way, was very pretty, that I felt it imperative to bring out as many as I could, for their continuous edification.

"First of all he told us that a great friend of his was private confidant to the great Emperor.

" 'And who may he be?' I innocently asked.

"He eyed me askance for a second, and then said :

" 'Rule Britannia ; Britannia rule the waves.'

which I thought a curious quotation for a foreigner, and not remarkably *à-propos*, but he seemed so pleased with himself after having said it that I disguised my thoughts, and waited for what should come next.

"He smiled, and said, ' You are surprised, sare, that I know your poets so well. I have been much in England, as everywhere else—confidential missions, you understand. Sare, I was alluding to the great Napoleon the Third, the man who has done so much for *la belle France*. He is a great admirer of beauty, especially of English ladies (and he bowed round the carriage) ; they have much influence with him ; *they* prevented the intended invasion of England ; it was all planned, even to the last pound of gunpowder. I do assure you I know the particulars. I saw it all on paper. Not that he dislikes your country—*au contraire*, he loves it—but it was to show his power. But the ladies would not have it, they forbid it, and the orders were all countermanded.'

"I told him this information was very interesting, but that I was no politician, only a traveller, and as he had seen so much, could he give me any hints as to the Nile?"

"The Nile, sure, I know it well; it is a big river; you will be drowned, you will be sure to be drowned; you had better not go there."

"But I said, I should like to go there."

"I dare say you would, sure, but you forget the crocodiles. You will line one of their stomachs. How would you like that?"

"Wymerly shouts out I must leave off, and go out, so I will only add that every word I have written is absolutely true, and may therefore be received with unqualified belief, and that you shall have the remainder when I find time to write it."

"F. S."

"P.S.- The pretty girl had a brother in another carriage. I shall cultivate his acquaintance."

CHAPTER IX.

AT INTERLACHEN.

As several days passed without Mr. Wymerly's calling at Moorton Manor after the party, Mr. Trevor began to be desirous of ascertaining what amount of truth there was in the various stories that were flying about the country concerning him. One, amongst others, was that he was so largely in debt that even the ample fortune into which he had come did not suffice to cover past extravagances, and the reckless expenditure into which he had plunged upon inheriting it. Mr. Trevor had heard that he had gone away, but he did not believe it, and with the purpose of at least ascertaining that fact, he one morning rode over to Wharton House.

When he found the house shut up, and the master flown, and the servants not knowing

where he was gone to, nor when he would return, Mr. Trevor, to say the least, felt very sorry. He had taken a real liking for Mr. Wymerly, had found him by far the most intelligent man in the neighbourhood, and had quite looked forward with pleasure to seeing a great deal of him whenever he should be staying at Moorton Manor. In the background of his thoughts was a half-formed one, that he might prove a suitable match for Cecilia. Mr. Trevor wished her to marry, not because he did not think she could do very well without it as far as she herself was concerned, but because he knew, only too well, how liable she would be to be imposed upon by the want of principle of the large number of people with whom her property must lead her into contact. He also felt it was a miserable pity that so large an estate should have no political influence.

As Mr. Trevor rode away he met Mr. Summers, who was just passing by the gate to the drive, and who said, "You've found him gone. I've had a letter from my mother to-day, who says he is off to Egypt with my brother Frank. It's rather astounding; it's so sudden; but they are old chums, and I dare say Wymerly is glad of a complete change."

"Oh," said Mr. Trevor, somewhat relieved,

"but I think he might have called upon us before going."

"Well, yes, but I suppose you've heard what every one is talking about?"

"I've heard a great deal more than I like. It can't all be true. Do you suppose he is really deeply in debt?"

"The last man in the world to be so. I have heard from Frank that he was a model at college. Men don't alter their natures in two minutes. I hope Miss Trevor is well?"

"Quite well, thank you. We shall be all dispersed in a few days. But what do you believe about Miss Castleton?"

"I really don't know what to believe. She and her mother have really left Powdridge Court, I suppose; but even that may be untrue."

"Of that, I think, there's no doubt. Markham saw them at the station."

"You don't say so! Then that seems a fact; for the rest we must wait. I'm very sorry we are going to lose you. Is it for long?"

"Oh, you know we are only here on a visit. My wife and I have persuaded Miss Moorton to go abroad with us."

"And Miss Trevor?"

"No, we leave her behind. She is going to

pay a round of visits ; she may join us subsequently, but I expect not ; we shall be back before she has come to an end of her invitations."

"Then you will return here?"

"Just to deposit Miss Moorton, but we shall not spend the winter here. I must pass some time at my own place. I have already been away several months."

Here the two gentlemen parted company, and Mr. Trevor returned to report at Moorton Manor the result of his visit. It was not satisfactory. Cecilia was very sorry, she had hoped to have made arrangements with Mr. Wymerly for the increased enlightenment of the inhabitants of Nunneley, before leaving ; and now it must be indefinitely postponed. Even though things might not come out about him, which would make her hesitate to have much to do with him, it was very disappointing.

However, she had not much time for thinking about it. All those who had been at the party were calling ; there was a regular levee each afternoon of the few days that elapsed before starting for the continent, when the pleasure and delight that was expressed might have gratified any young mistress at the success of her entertainment.

Helen left the day before. On some excuse or

another, Mr. Summers had called each day since he met Mr. Trevor, and heard how soon the party was to break up; and when Helen and her father drove up to the station, there was, also, Mr. Summers on the platform, going by the same train, and delighted to look after luggage, and do everything that he could besides, to relieve the monotony of a railway journey.

Mr. Wymerly's letter to Mr. Trevor arrived the morning of the day the rest of the party started. It would be difficult to say whether it was productive of more gratification to him or to Cecilia. It gave a perfectly simple and valid excuse; and was written so as to remove at once all suspicion that disgraceful conduct was the cause of his absence.

When Cecilia travelled with the Trevors everything was done in the most comfortable fashion. Mrs. Trevor liked travelling when she had the comforts of an English home about her too. She was very fond of Cecilia, who was very grateful to her for all the kindness she had received from her, and who showed her all the attentions of a daughter. The complete independence of her position removed her from the region of petty storms, which not unfrequently disturbed all harmony between Helen and her

mother, and which, as Helen grew older, increased rather than diminished in number ; so that it came to pass that Cecilia looked forward to her absence during this journey rather as a relief, than with the feeling of regret she would have otherwise had.

Mrs. Trevor was not equal to half the expeditions that her husband liked to make. This incapacity formed the chief enjoyment of Cecilia. To take Mrs. Trevor's place, and to be alone with Mr. Trevor for hours, either enjoying the beauties of nature, or art, gave her the rarest of pleasures ; the society of a congenial mind, much wiser, and more experienced than her own.

In the first instance they went to Paris, but there they made no stay. It was dusty and empty, so they proceeded to Lyons, Geneva, Vevay, where they rested awhile, and then went on to Interlachen. There they resolved to remain some weeks, making excursions in the neighbourhood as inclination prompted.

They had only been there three days, when, as Mr. Trevor and Cecilia were starting for a walk along the road to Thun, in order to choose a spot for sketching, as they left the hotel, they saw a man in the regular Englishman's grey costume, walking up to the door. Each party looked at the other, and mutual recognition im-

mediately followed. It was Mr. Staunton, but looking so different from what he had done while staying with Mr. Wymerly, that both sides smiled in conscious recognition of the fact. A month's walking amongst the higher Alps, had not only spoiled his complexion; it had also given him a look of vigour, in curious contrast to the pale, lazy, Epicurean air he had then affected.

"I see you hardly know me!" he exclaimed, with a highly-amused smile.

Of course, both Mr. Trevor and Cecilia declared they recognised him at once. And then followed a quick succession of questions and replies, about every one in general, and Mr. Wymerly in particular.

"Where is he?" asked Mr. Staunton; "I know nothing whatever about him; he has given no sign since the night of your dance, when he was nowhere to be found."

They told him all they knew, keeping back, however, the idle gossip which had so annoyed themselves.

"Gone with Frank Summers, has he? Then he'll be sure to be killed."

"Indeed," said Mr. Trevor.

"Quite sure. All the Summerses have a touch of madness about them—some in their heads, and some in their heels. Frank has it in his

heels ; but they are all people who cannot take the world as they find it."

"You don't seem to have been doing so lately," remarked Cecilia.

"Yes ; that's just what I have been doing—walking a little about, that's all. Man was made to walk."

"I thought you considered he was made to sit still."

"Oh, occasionally : when he has not time to walk. Now, for instance, I am prepared to do so, as I have been on my feet for pretty nearly two days."

"Then we will not detain you," said Mr. Trevor, as he and Cecilia bowed, and set off on their expedition.

It was a hot, lovely day, and the roads were terribly dusty. There was little shade to take off the white glare ; and, beautiful as the lake looked, backed by the mountains, it was a long time before Cecilia could meet with the exact spot, with sufficient shelter, that would make it possible for her to take a sketch. She succeeded in doing nothing more than selecting the place where she would go another day ; and, this accomplished, Mr. Trevor and she returned only too gladly to the coolness of the large rooms of the hotel.

Mrs. Trevor was not well pleased to hear of Mr. Staunton's arrival. He was no favourite of hers ; his manners were not sufficiently respectful towards her. He smiled, she thought satirically, at things she said, which was not proper in a young man to a middle-aged lady. If he did think himself so much wiser than she was, at least he need not show it. But his crowning offence was his very free way of talking upon every subject, no matter what it was. If he did really think such dreadful things as he said, she thought the least he could do was to keep them to himself.

So it happened that after the late *table d'hôte*, when Mr. Trevor and Mr. Staunton adjourned to the large salon, instead of going with them, she whispered to Cecilia that they would retire to her bedroom, and there she kept her the rest of the evening, to Cecilia's no small amusement.

The next few days Cecilia was out directly after breakfast, before the worst heat came on, working hard at her drawing. She knew that the Trevors wanted a picture for their morning sitting-room, and that they would much like one done by her. It was with the intention of giving them the one she was about to make that she had carefully consulted Mr. Trevor as to the spot from which it should be taken, and

now, having selected the subject, she meant to begin and complete it there. There was no reason why they should leave before she had time to do so.

But she also had meant that Mr. Trevor should have sat with her pretty frequently while she was at work ; and when four days passed without his coming near her, she began to take almost as great a dislike to Mr. Staunton as Mrs. Trevor had done.

It *was* Mr. Staunton's fault. He was well pleased to have such a companion as Mr. Trevor for several excursions which they both of them believed would be too much for the ladies, and Mr. Trevor went with him all the more readily because he believed that Cecilia was employed as she liked best, and really did not want him.

Mr. Staunton was also pleased that Cecilia was occupied, as it left Mr. Trevor free. He was a little piqued at the absolute indifference shown in Cecilia's manner towards him ; not that he had any cause to complain of want of politeness—she was too much of a lady not to be polite—but he would have liked to have seen a little more desire to hear his opinions in one who was what of all things he most disliked, an intellectual woman.

“ It was quite true that Cecilia was indifferent

to his opinion. She felt that he played with life, which, with all the vehemence of her nature and age, she felt to be a very serious thing. Mr. Staunton's principal object seemed to be personal peace, or enjoyment, and she could not but see how inferior he was, in that respect, to Mr. Wymerly, with whom, however much she might differ in opinions, ways, and methods, she still always felt that he wished to do what lay in his power for the progress of others, and that he would undergo personal privation, and work with a will, in order to accomplish it.

Cecilia did not tell Mr. Trevor how much she missed him, as she believed he was enjoying himself; but she devoutly wished that Mr. Staunton would take himself off. And she set off, on the fifth day after his arrival, with little inclination for the work in hand.

Having arrived at her seat, she sat down, but neither prepared her colours nor began to draw. She felt, as many another has done besides, that you cannot force nature, and if the mood is not right, the work cannot be done well. She was vexed with herself. Why was she so foolish as to be put out because Mr. Trevor preferred going about with Mr. Staunton to sitting still with her? Did it not give her the better opportunity for doing just the very thing she wished?

Perhaps so ; but that made no difference ; what she wanted was Mr. Trevor's presence, and that she had not got.

"Horrid man !" she mentally exclaimed (this was Mr. Staunton) ; "I wish he had never come here, and then I should be perfectly happy."

How much perfect happiness is thought to hang upon the alteration of one small thing !

However, as he had come, there was nothing to be done but to endure him until he went ; so, after a little while, Cecilia began to draw, and worked industriously for about an hour, when a rustling near her made her look round, and whom should she see but Mr. Staunton himself.

Cecilia coloured to the roots of her hair ; but recollected people do not know one's thoughts, and had quite regained her composure before Mr. Staunton had freed himself from the brushwood which prevented easy access to the spot where she was.

"I hope I did not frighten you, Miss Morton, nor that I intrude ; but Mr. Trevor has to go out with Mrs. Trevor this morning, so he told me where I could find you, and I have come to take a lesson in drawing, if you will give me one. May I look ?"

"Oh, certainly, but you will not get much instruction from me."

"Now that's cruel; you mean you refuse to give it?"

"I mean I cannot teach more than I know myself."

Meanwhile, Mr. Staunton had been looking at her drawing, and being no bad judge, was greatly surprised to see what good work it was. It was no mere amateur's daub, but real good work, done with an artist's eye and hand.

"Really, Miss Moorton, I am ashamed to say, I came to criticise, but I stay to admire. You'll excuse me, but you are doing this uncommonly well."

Cecilia could not but be pleased at this, the approbation was so genuine, and it somewhat mollified her sensations towards Mr. Staunton; but there was at the same time a something in the tone of self-satisfied superiority in which it was said that prevented the remark being very acceptable. However, she determined to be pleasant, and putting down her brush, she said, "There are so many beautiful subjects round here, it is quite difficult which to choose."

"Yes, to a real artist, who can find beauty which he cannot exhaust even in a roadside bank, especially if there is a ditch beneath it where the weeds grow as they like: the *entourage* of such a neighbourhood as this is almost surfeiting."

This was the first remark Mr. Staunton had ever made that gave Cecilia real pleasure. She in her turn was surprised, and said, "You really think that?"

"Why should you doubt it?"

"Oh, I don't know, but——"

"Now it's just that but, I should like to have explained," said Mr. Staunton, in his old lazy affected tone of voice, which he seemed before to have left behind in England, and Cecilia had not heard until now. As he said it, he threw himself at full length on the ground, evidently showing he meant to remain, the position in which he had placed himself being one in which when he chose he could turn round and look at Cecilia, though otherwise his eyes looked upon the same landscape as hers did.

It was a great temptation to Cecilia to say what she had really meant, but she answered instead, "Is not 'but' a very favourite word with you?"

"How so?"

"You have appeared to me to find 'buts' to every subject I have heard you talk about."

"You are very enigmatic. Do you mean that I never admire?"

"Perhaps I do; that is, if you mean admire from sympathy and belief. I should rather have said that you never believe."

"Oh yes, I do."

"May I ask in what?"

There was a pause, during which Mr. Staunton appeared to be thinking. It ended by his saying, with a very comical expression on his face, "I really do believe in myself."

Cecilia laughed. "That's honest, at least; but it makes me curious to know whether there is any other thing in which you believe."

"Do you mean to put me through my catechism?"

"Not if you have any objection."

"Oh, none whatever; you will find it a very short one."

"Will you tell me then whether it is true that you are so satisfied with the ways and means of this little world of ours that you are content to accept it as the whole of man's existence? and what has made you so?"

"This is becoming serious; and in my turn I must ask, what reason have we to believe in anything beyond what we see?"

"Have we not revelation?"

There was no reply. Cecilia waited quietly curious and anxious to know what he would say, for her mind was very unsettled on the subject, and the Vicar's absolute faith, so far from helping her, produced exactly the contrary

effect. As no reply came, she at last looked up, and met Mr. Staunton's eyes looking curiously at her. "Well, what does the catechism say?"

"I am puzzled what to reply. If that is your standpoint, I had better hold my tongue. I supposed from your question it was not."

"Is that your way of saying you do not believe in revelation?"

"As you please; but for the purpose of the present conversation, it would be as well to assume that word was not an answer to my question, if you are able to do so."

"As we are in Switzerland, and not in England, I think I may for once."

"Then I repeat my question."

"But that is not answering mine. I really should like to know what you have to say about it?"

"Are you quite sure you can bear it?"

"Yes, quite," said Cecilia, in a tone which carried conviction with it.

"Then, apart from what is called revelation, I see nothing whatever to make me believe that man will live again. As far as we see, we cannot leave this earth, and on this earth everything perishes. The facts are so strongly against them, that the parsons are obliged to have recourse to their shibboleth—revelation. They

have no other answer to scientific objections, or, if you prefer it, commonplace experience."

"If that is true, how do you prevent the effect it would have upon all moral questions?"

"Do you mean the evil effect?"

"Yes, of course I do; by destroying all motive for doing anything but what we like."

"Ah! you have been well drilled. I do not see that the prospect of another existence produces anything but selfishness, narrow views, and narrow hearts."

"Really that is not so. I constantly see people exercising self-restraint, because they expect to reap the consequences of their conduct here in another life."

"So they may say, but if they did not believe in it, you would find they acted just the same. If people are unselfish, they act unselfishly; if they are selfish, so are their actions."

"But do you know I really cannot see what other hope would be strong enough to prevent our making the very most we can of our own personal enjoyment in this life, if everything ends when we do."

"And would it not be a much better world to live in if we all did make the most of it, instead of the worst, as the saints do? You know they are terribly bad company."

"There are so many who never have any enjoyment; it seems so selfish to pass them all by."

"They must be educated and improved."

"Yes, in time; but meanwhile?"

"That's a question for Wymmerly. You should ask him. I am contented to act according to my nature, and to lay it down when I can't help doing so. I don't see why we should live again. I think most likely we shall not; that being so, why should I make myself unhappy about it? It is far wiser to do all I can with what is within my reach."

"But that centres the whole interest of life in yourself?"

"Where else can it be placed? It is their own salvation your saints seek, whatever name they may call it. After all, virtue is immensely overrated; what makes you admire it?"

"You will say it is a mere repetition, if I say, because it is in itself admirable."

"Oh, that will do. I will illustrate it, that I may see if I catch your meaning. You mean that it excites in you the same kind of feeling that an unskilled pickpocket experiences in observing the actions of a skilled one?"

"That will not quite do."

"Will it not? You forget that virtue is a

relative term, and bears a different signification to different minds, in accordance with the education they have received."

"And therefore that we may use the same word correctly, for the sensations excited in the mind of an honest man when he witnesses the skill of the professor of thieving?"

A faint smile played round Mr. Staunton's mouth while he said, "That is very well put. No, I did not mean that, but I do mean that we find a world around us which we did not make and cannot alter, and therefore must accept our position. I have no wish but that everyone, as well as myself, should be happy, and what you would call good, but which I should call by a different name; but I neither expect they will be, nor do I see that it would add to my happiness to try and make them so."

"Then you don't believe in duty?"

"That word is so obsolete, that I find it inadequate to express the modern form of the idea it is used to express. There are certain laws we must obey, unless we are prepared to suffer the consequences of disregarding them."

"And you think that is the motive, and a sufficient one, for following one course of action rather than another?"

"I do. I cannot see that we require anything else."

"That would never have nerved the martyrs."

"Martyrs belonged to the childhood of the world. Who would be foolish enough to be burnt alive for their faith nowadays? Surely you would not like to be?"

"Like! no!" said Cecilia, amused at the earnestness with which Mr. Staunton asked the question; "but, without being burnt, there are other ways in which people may have to endure a great deal from not believing as those about them do."

"Ah! indeed! perhaps so; women are very hard upon one another."

"You are very rude."

"I beg pardon, but if you live amongst a lot of one-ideaed beauties, you have no occasion to tell them what you think."

"But if I live among very plain women, with plenty of ideas, I may?"

"That's as you fancy. I do not see any motive for expressing your thoughts, if it brings annoyance to you."

"I suppose not," said Cecilia, very quietly.

"You promised not to be shocked, but you are, all the same."

"I am puzzled by your views. I do not find they help me."

"If you'll take my advice upon particular

cases, you will be sure to go right ; it's useless, especially for a woman who can draw as well as you do, to trouble herself as to theories."

"It may be useless, but that will not prevent her doing so."

"Ah, well ! I know good advice is always thrown away."

Cecilia now rose ; she could not go on drawing while Mr. Staunton enunciated this philosophy. She had brought it on herself, she knew ; and therefore she could only say it was too hot to remain out, and return to the hotel.

CHAPTER X.

THE ASCENT OF THE WENGERN.

AT the evening *table d'hôte* of this same day there were several fresh arrivals; owing to which, Mr. Staunton between whom and her father Cecilia had until now sat, was removed much further down the table, and she had a young lady for her left-hand neighbour, who was one of a party just come.

This young lady wished to be very friendly, and no sooner was the soup despatched than she began to exclaim about the delights of everything she had seen. Nothing that had happened to her party had been of a common description: from morning till night their days had been full of adventures; it was like living in a story-book. She was quite sure none had ever enjoyed themselves so much as they all of them had done, and the only thing she dreaded was the day when papa should say they must turn back.

"Are you a large party?" asked Cecilia, much amused.

"Not very; there's Teddy—he's just had the whooping-cough, and has come abroad to get strong; then there's Maria and Julia—they are sitting just opposite with papa; mamma is beyond me. So that's not many, you see, but enough to make us laugh together; we really are an awfully jolly set."

"Shall you remain here any length of time?"

"Of course we must see all the things that Murray says are to be seen. I do not know how long that will take. Papa and I generally settle what to do; it bothers mamma, and Teddy is too young."

"There are some delightful excursions from here, one to Grindlewald, which we intend to make. No doubt you will too?"

"Oh yes! I remember that was one place we were to go to. Oh! wouldn't it be nice if we could all go together?"

"I should have thought your party was large enough, without any addition."

"Oh dear no! we consider ourselves very few! we should not care how many we were. It's so much pleasanter to be a large number. There's so much more talking and laughing, you

know; we all think so. May I tell mamma you will go with us?"

"Not quite yet. I must consult my friends before I could say I would go; you see, it will require a little consideration—perhaps our times might not suit."

"Oh, as to that, we can always suit anybody's time. We have not been anywhere alone; we've always joined some other party, and that's one reason why we've been so jolly. We've had lots of experience in fitting in; now, do say you'll come."

Cecilia was in that mood, that the idea of joining these careless, happy people had an unusual attraction for her. So, after a good deal more talk, and some consultation with Mr. Trevor, it was agreed that she should join them the next day in an excursion, during which they might be absent two or three days. Mrs. Trevor was not inclined to go, so Mr. Trevor would remain with her.

That night, when Cecilia went up into her bedroom and thought over the day's events, an unusual feeling of sadness and seriousness came over her. The door she had just closed had put a barrier between her and the varied forms of active life around her; there was nothing to distract, nothing to interrupt the workings of

her busy brain. It was in one sense a relief. She wanted to think, but it was also a pain such as she had not yet experienced. She sat down by the window, and looked out. Straight before her, closing in the dip between two high hills, rose the Jungfrau, clear and distinct against the blue-black of the sky, its snowy top standing soft and ghost-like in the silver light of the moon. The hills that filled in the foreground were thickly wooded, and the darkness upon them, cast from their opposing heights, in its impenetrable mystery, appeared to her as a type of the knowledge of man. But here, in Nature, and above all this, was a pure, kindly light, with such a power of fascination, that she sat gazing at it, unconscious how long she had done so, until her eyes ached with the strain she had put upon them; while she thought could it be true that we were to grope through such darkness as that before her, and then all would be over? No hereafter!—and her heart gave a cry of despair, positively sickening in its intensity and disappointment.

She sat still for a long time, and then began to take herself to task for her present thoughts. Why should she feel so distressed, because one man had that day told her he believed this life to be all? It was only an opinion of one man,

it was true, but it was an inexpressible shock to her to find that any one could not only disbelieve in immortality, but so quietly express it, and seem so contented without it. She would have very much liked to ask Mr. Trevor what he believed, but she had been considerably startled by several things he had said during the summer in conversation with Mr. Wymerly, and the dread of discovering that he too had no positive belief on the subject held her back.

She said to herself that he surely must believe in immortality, it seemed so absolutely necessary as the completion of any providential government of the world; and as Mr. Trevor regularly went to church with them all, she thought he would not do so if he disbelieved all that he heard. She would not doubt him, but she would not ask him any questions. And then she said to herself, "Supposing what Mr. Staunton says is true, and that we have to learn that it is so, am I such a poor thing that I can only be happy by believing in a chimera? Why should I be so miserable? Am I not most fortunately placed? Do I not possess almost everything that people desire? Is immortality just the roc's egg, without which I cannot be happy? Is Mr. Staunton far beyond me both in knowledge and in courage? Do I possess all things?

Perhaps, now. But should Mr. Trevor die—"and the thought that she should lose him took strong possession of her—"where should I be then, without one friend with whom I have really mental sympathy, and without the hope that we may ever meet again?" Cecilia shivered as she asked herself this question, and for the first time in her life considered what a life of complete isolation hers would be without the existence of the one kind friend to whom she could always turn in doubt and difficulty. But her thoughts soon returned to the momentous question they began with, and she asked herself were human beings of sufficient value that it signified what became of them? What was she herself? As there was no one by to say to her, in any of the various forms in which it is said, "Oh, you burn wax lights, as you please, whilst others spare their dips; you drive your coach, while others go afoot, which makes it all right for you to do or not to do, as you like," Cecilia met with no mercy at her own hands.

What was she? A young lady, and nothing else. That could not much signify, if at all; if it was all to end in a few years, she could not be blamed if she did endeavour to pick out all the plums of life and avoid all its pains; but as the thought lay before her, a something within

her rejected it with disdain, and she said aloud to herself, "I cannot lower myself to such an ignoble belief; I cannot live without that hope."

The moonlight had left the mountain top, which remained clothed in the faintest pearl grey, ere Cecilia went to bed. When she did so, it was with the strongest feeling that life, with every advantage, was not worth having if all our progress was limited to and ended by the barrier of the seen. "How much there is in my own nature that is unseen, and yet of the *truest*," was her last reflection before sleep put an end to conscious thought.

Mr. Staunton was not displeased at being separated from Cecilia at the dinner-table. After they parted in the morning he was not altogether satisfied with himself. Carried away by the wish to see how a lady would bear to hear a few wholesome truths, he had spoken out in a way which was quite foreign to his nature, and which upon cool reflection he condemned. If he had excited Cecilia, and she had given him an opportunity of displaying the superiority of his own mind, and of ministering to the weakness of hers, there might have been a pleasant sensation in the act; but instead of that, she had, unconsciously on her part, left him with a sense of failure. He would not have been sur-

prised at any degree of weakness in a woman upon religious questions, and could he have known her thoughts as she sat in her room at night, they would have appeared to him as nothing else, but he did not like to feel that he had made only a disagreeable impression upon her, and he wished he had adhered to his usual reticence.

That it were possible the weakness or deficiency might be in his own mind, in being contented without the hopes which desire something more than we obtain here, never, of course, entered his head, though it did that he had been a fool to put it into Miss Moorton's power to say that he had no such belief. That might have inconvenient consequences. To enjoy perfect freedom from theological ties was one thing, but it was quite another to let the world know it. He was a man of this time; he always had conformed externally, and meant to continue doing it, the law of honour on such questions not *yet* requiring truth of act as the sign of truth of thought.

Mr. Staunton hoped Miss Moorton would keep to herself what had passed between them, and felt somewhat reassured as he reflected that she would be sure not to discuss such subjects with ladies, and with men it would not matter.

The following day, when Cecilia awoke, all

the phantoms of the night before had vanished. If youth has its moments of despair, with a sharper edge than belongs to a later time of life, it alone possesses that hope which is the mother of winged victory, who flies triumphant over every obstacle ; and though the night before Cecilia had condemned herself as a thoroughly worthless person, when the sun had risen, and she saw things by daylight, she was by no means of the same opinion. Idle she had been as to action, but then she had to learn how to act. Refreshed by sleep, the real power there was within her asserted itself, and brought the determination that leads to deeds with it. Even the weight of the future might be left to itself, and until her return home the immediate work before her was to make the most of her present opportunities of enjoyment.

The party she was going to join rejoiced in the name of Grant. When they all met in the *salle* where breakfast was served, her friend of the previous day, Mary Grant, came up to Cecilia with effusion, and introduced her to Mr. Grant, who expressed with fervour his delight at her going with them.

It was settled that they should set off at ten, and in the first place drive through the valley of Lauterbrunnen to the foot of the Wengern ;

which they were to cross—the ladies on horse-back, the gentlemen walking.

As they were driving along, Mary said she was in an awful fright about the horses, for she had been told that they always went over the sides, "and you know," she added, "unless one could slip off, one would have to go too."

"Not quite always," said Cecilia, with a smile; "and if they do they come back again."

"So one has only to stick on; well, that's some comfort."

"Didn't I tell you so, you silly," exclaimed Teddy, from the coach-box.

"That's all very well for you, sir," said Julia, "but you told me yourself that the only way of keeping the mules in their places was by pulling off their tails."

There was loud laughter at this, in which Julia joined with the rest, not because she knew she had said anything silly, but because they were all so merry, that when one laughed they all did the same.

When it subsided Mr. Grant said: "Not a very secure way of doing it, Julie, but——"

Here the rest of his sentence was lost, by Mrs. Grant exclaiming, in great distress, "Oh! Mary, my dear, my bag! my bag! I do believe I've left it behind at the hotel."

The carriage was stopped, every one was turned out, and a severe search instituted for the missing bag, which eventually turned up hid in the boot, behind a bundle of hay the driver was bringing for the horses.

When order was again restored, and they were once more on their way, Mary whispered to Cecilia: "This happens two or three times a day, but the bag always turns up, so I never mind; you'll get used to it in time, as I am; it's no use to fidget about it."

The missing bag, when it made its appearance, was no beauty. It had evidently seen a great deal of service, but it puzzled Cecilia what could be the particular value attached to it. The drive through the valley of the Lauterbrunnen was a piece of intense enjoyment to Cecilia. Mr. Grant pulled out his "Murray," and studied it pretty nearly the whole way. He was one of those persons who never admire anything unless they have been told that they ought to do so; the overhanging rocks, the stream winding through the plain, the beautiful forms and colours of natural scenery, were lost upon him, until he met with some passage in his guide book, beginning with "Here you must notice," etc.; then he was immediately full of enthusiasm, and pointed out in minute detail everything

that he had authority for admiring. To all this Mrs. Grant listened attentively, wondering at the extent of her husband's information, and answered with appropriate words of sympathy and edification. The young people meanwhile kept up an almost unceasing accompaniment of merry talking and laughter, which was only occasionally slightly checked by their father's saying: "Really, children, I wish you would not make so much noise; your mother cannot hear a word I say."

This produced a momentary silence, to be broken the next minute by a whispered joke, which had to be repeated louder for the benefit of the rest, who also indulged in a louder laugh, until the sounds went on, crescendo, to their previous height, and not unfrequently both father and mother joined in too, made young themselves by the irresistible merriment of their children.

Cecilia, though often appealed to both by the young Grants, as well as their father and mother, yet found she was not called upon for any mental exertion; and while the enjoyment of those she was with kept her own spirits without any conscious effort at a happy pitch, she was able at the same time to take in a world of beauty lying entirely outside the mental vision of those she was with.

By the time they had reached the spot where the ascent of the Wengern begins, the day had become so hot that every one was thankful to exchange the small carriage, in which they were crowded together, for the horses and mules on which their further progress depended.

It took some time to mount the whole party, with a stirrup too long here, and a saddle turning round just where it should not, there ; but at last they were all fairly in train, Cecilia leading the way, as the most experienced of the equestrians. She let her horse go as he wished, knowing well she might trust these sagacious mountain horses to do the best both for themselves and those they carry. Holding the reins without any attempt at guidance, she proceeded gladly, pleased to have nothing before her but the winding paths, the distant views, and the lovely lights and shades lying on everything. The noise made by the boy urging on her horse did not disturb her ; it chimed in with her thoughts like the refrain of a ballad, while she got so far ahead of the rest that their shouts and laughter sounded quite a long way off.

In the endeavour to keep together, the steeds of the three girls and their mother were always getting into each other's way ; and instead of following the advice of the men in charge of the

animals, each member of the party took her own way and method of protecting herself from the danger of being thrown over the edge of the path ; all which resulted in a degree of confusion that almost made the drivers lose their wits, though it only added to the zest the young people felt in the difficulties of the undertaking.

"Hei, hei, 'Pst !" shouted the boy to Marion's mule.

"Oh please don't, he's so near the edge !"

The boy grinned, as Marion looked fearfully over the steep descent they were coasting, and, without understanding a word she had said, ran off to urge on Mrs. Grant's horse with words and blows.

"Mr. Grant, Mr. Grant, come here, pray ! Do stop that boy ! The saddle is loose, I am sure it is ! I shall be off in a minute, I'm sure, see," screamed poor Mrs. Grant, at the top of her voice.

The valiant Teddy hastened to the assistance of his mother. And by the time the unfortunate animal who carried her had had his girths pulled so tight that he could hardly breathe, Mr. Grant, panting and puffing, arrived to the rescue.

"My dear, you are quite safe ; these men are well used to their work ; 'Murray' says so—you may quite trust them."

The horse's girths were so overtightened that he began to kick, which action on his part outweighed even "Murray's" authority; and Mrs. Grant, in terror, threw herself off the horse and on to Mr. Grant, nearly knocking him down with her sudden weight, exclaiming:

"I would rather fifty times walk than go on that dreadful beast."

"But, my dear, you can't think of the distance; it would be quite impossible for you, and I assure you 'Murray' says you have no cause for fear."

"I don't care what 'Murray' says," said Mrs. Grant, with sudden defiance. "I won't get on that creature again."

The man to whom the horses belonged here came up, and as soon as he saw the state of the case, at once loosened the poor animal's girths, who was quiet enough afterwards; but Mrs. Grant would not remount him, so Mary proposed to exchange with her mother, and matters being thus readjusted, the party proceeded onwards.

Through the delay caused by this little misadventure, Cecilia had got farther than ever ahead. She enjoyed her isolation with a true gipsy's spirit: everything around her was beautiful, her imagination was as full of pleasant

fancies as the previous night it had been filled with the reverse ; each stone her horse's feet stumbled over was remarkable in one way or another ; and every berry that hung ripe on the bushes as she passed possessed a shade of colour and a grace of its own. As she went along she began to sing out of the fulness of her joy, and the rocks reverberated the sound, until the air seemed full of gladness.

Higher and higher she went, until at length the shady covert ceased, and she found herself on the small plateau on the top, where they were to dine ; and whence that grand view of the Jungfrau is spread out before the eyes of the traveller, in all its full magnificence. The sight of it seemed to take her breath away. The grand mountain looked so near, and yet so distant, so full of repose and majesty, nay, almost kindliness, with the warm sun shining on its bare grey sides ; while the small avalanches that from time to time slid down from place to place, like a thread of silver and a sound of thunder, were the only warning notes of that sorrow which underlies the whole path of life, and over which we flit with the same thoughtlessness as the insects on the mountain's side.

Cecilia dismounted from her horse, and stood absorbed in the sight before her : the bare

rugged mass lifting its brow with stately pride into a cloudless sky, the intense heat giving the air a transparency unknown in our cooler climate, produced an effect upon her which she had never felt before. They touch a note in our nature which no dogma can produce and no knowledge disprove—a note which is often lost in the weary detail of every-day life; often listened for by the sad and sorrowful, and heard not; often crushed down by noisy argument and contented self-sufficiency, but which exists still, wherever a pure heart stands face to face with Nature in her grander moods, and listens.

A shout, a laugh, and a scream, roused Cecilia from the real ideal land in which she was living, and, turning round, she saw the three girls, each half off her saddle in a different position, while Mrs. Grant was only kept on to hers at all by her husband walking beside her and holding her hand.

Teddy ran up to Cecilia, and whispered to her confidentially:

“Oh, Miss Moorton, we’ve had such a jolly time, but they” (pointing behind him) “were all so frightened, you never saw anything like it.”

Cecilia smiled, and the rest of the party having come up, were only too glad to stretch their cramped limbs, and were quickly walking about

in every direction, when Mr. Grant called out, "Stop, children! come here!" He then told them there was no time to lose, that he should order dinner at once; that they must not go far, but be ready the moment he sounded his whistle, which he kept fastened to his button-hole for the purpose of reassembling his lawless crew. They all promised obedience, and were soon out of sight, while Mr. Grant went into the small hotel, to see what was to be had as an addition to the provisions which they had brought with them.

Mrs. Grant, having secured her bag, placed herself on the grass beside it, and Cecilia offered to remain with her.

"How good of you, Miss Moorton, to sit with a dull old woman, but, to tell you the truth, I am often very glad to have a quiet rest by myself. Mr. Grant enjoys the noise the young people make, and so do I, in a way, but I sometimes wish I was back again in England, and that they would all go on without me."

"I dare say you do," said Cecilia, kindly; "but when you are there once more, you will be very pleased to think about, and talk over with your children, all you have done together."

"Perhaps I shall," said Mrs. Grant, with a sigh, "if I ever get there; but that horse to-

day was really terrible, and how I am to get down this mountain I'm sure I don't know."

"You will not find it so difficult when you are rested, and have had something to eat," said Cecilia.

"Oh, it is so hot!" said Mrs. Grant, fanning herself with her handkerchief. "You would not mind my examining my bag, to see if all the things are safe, would you?"

As this was exactly what Cecilia wanted to know about, she pushed the bag closer to Mrs. Grant, and then sat down herself near, saying:

"Oh dear, no; can I help you?"

"I do not think you can, as I am the only person who knows what my bag ought to contain; but if you would see that I put all the things back again that I take out, I shall feel more comfortable about them."

"That I will, with pleasure."

Mrs. Grant, after pulling innumerable small things out of her pocket, at length produced the key, and fitting it into the lock, the bag was soon open. The first thing she took out was a bottle of balsam of Peru, most carefully done up, first in white paper, next in thick brown ditto, and finally in wash-leather; but in spite of all the care taken, the scent of it was so powerful that the whole bag smelt of it. Next came a

small bar of soap, then a thick roll of flannel, and another of old linen, next some lint, a box of jujubes, another of cough lozenges, some barley sugar, liquorice, acidulated drops, a box of "Goose's" family antibilious pills, a bottle of compound tincture of rhubarb, some senna, salts, and finally, a silver mug, spoon, fork, and knife.

All these things were steadied and kept in their places, by three woollen mufflers for the throat, and when they were placed upon the grass, so that Mrs. Grant could take a comprehensive view of them, she gave a sigh of satisfaction, and looked up to Cecilia with a countenance beaming with content.

"There, Miss Moorton, when I look at these things I feel safe. Whatever happens, my husband and children have something to fall back upon; you see how wild they are, and nobody knows what may happen to any of us. When you have looked long enough at them, I will put them back, for fear Mr. Grant should summon us to eat, and some of them should be left behind in my hurry, for Mr. Grant does not like to be kept waiting."

Cecilia, with some difficulty, preserved her gravity during the display, and having assured Mrs. Grant that she should take a lesson from

her prudent forethought, she hastened to hand back one thing after another, the more effectually to conceal her amusement.

The last muffler was being rammed in, when Mr. Grant appeared at the door of the hotel, and a shrill whistle soon disturbed the quiet of the scene.

The young people for once kept their promise, and before long the whole party were assembled round the table in the one room the hotel contained, with appetites sharpened by the mountain air. Before they rose to proceed, there was nothing but empty dishes left.

CHAPTER XI.

A THUNDER-STORM.

CECILIA had a great wish to make a sketch, which she might carry away as a remembrance. It would help to recall some of the thoughts that had filled her mind with a feeling of peace, that lay outside the region where the war of words takes place; and as her horse was the swiftest steed of the party, she begged to remain behind for half an hour, to do so.

To this no one made any objection. The man who provided the horses called his youngest son, who, he said, knew the way quite as well as he did, and telling him to follow with the lady when she was ready, the rest of the party proceeded on their way.

While people are sketching, time goes by unheeded; and when Cecilia at length rose, after having, as she thought, been drawing barely the

time she had mentioned, it was fully an hour after the others had left.

. The clearness that had marked the morning atmosphere had all disappeared ; a thickish mist had come over the view, rendering the heat more intolerable than ever. Heavy clouds were coming up, the little boy was in a fidget to be off, and the man at the hotel advised Cecilia to be quick, as he pointed to the clouds, and shook his head.

Cecilia did not know what fear meant, so she took it very quietly. She even thought she should like to witness a storm on the mountain, if it took place ; but, once mounted, she did set off as fast as the nature of the road admitted.

For some time everything went quite smoothly, but then she came to a place where the road divided ; one way led down such large pieces of rock it looked as if it would be impossible for horses' feet to tread upon them or over them ; the other way was over smooth green grass. Cecilia paused, and looked at the boy. He seemed a little puzzled, but finally pointed to the grassy road ; and as the other way seemed to her impossible, she followed the boy's direction without misgiving. It was a very pleasant way, the grass was so green, and the trees grew in a variety and luxuriance that

she had not seen along any other part of the way. She continued in this direction some time, the boy stopping behind pretty frequently to gather the berries that hung ripe in the bushes, when all at once the horse's feet sank into wet mud, from which it with difficulty recovered them, and, looking ahead, Cecilia saw water glistening through the trees. A tolerably wide stream was running down the side of the mountain, whose waters overflowed to some distance on both sides, and it was into the edge of the swampy land occasioned by it that the horse had just put its feet.

Cecilia quickly pulled her horse back, and, turning round, saw the boy running hastily towards her, calling out, "Mams'llé, Mams'llé ! —Fleu' ! fleu' !"'

She now knew they had taken the wrong road. How was the right one to be recovered ? Her guide appeared to have entirely lost his wits ; he was not above eleven years old, and the consternation expressed on his countenance was anything but reassuring.

There appeared nothing else to be done, except to regain the spot where the road had divided, and this she endeavoured to do as quickly as might be. But everything looked so different in returning from what it had done

while going in the opposite direction, and as Cecilia had really paid very little attention to the road, trusting to the knowledge of her youthful guide, she was often greatly puzzled what to do. It is no wonder, therefore, that she took a wrong turn, and arriving at a place where the bare rock cropped out in a manner very similar to the spot she was seeking, though that was far distant, that she felt quite reassured, and without hesitation turned her horse's head and followed where it led. The boy kept talking very fast, in a patois of which she could not make out one word. He seemed restless and uncertain, and frequently peeped through the trees as if in search of some signs of the route which were not to be seen. After a while the rock disappeared from the surface, and they came upon a smooth grass plain without any track across it; but the boy seemed to know it, smiled, and nodded that she should proceed; so Cecilia urged on the horse to a trot, and only just pulled him up in time to prevent him plunging over a steep precipice which terminated the grass plain. It did give her a shudder when she saw the danger she had so narrowly escaped; and turning round, she was nearly blinded by a vivid flash of lightning, which appeared to enter the earth only a short distance from where she was. It was

quickly followed by a tremendous peal of thunder, which continued to reverberate from rock to rock in one long roll, as if it would never cease.

The effect was so grand that, in spite of the real danger in which she was placed, Cecilia could not but feel an unwonted exhilaration and enjoyment in the scene before her. Her horse, frightened by the lightning, trembled violently, and she got off him, lest any sudden movement on his part might place her anywhere whence it would be impossible to recover herself. But, once on the ground and the reins in her hand, she paused a moment to gaze on the mighty forces at work about her. Flash followed flash in quick succession ; the thunder was apparently continuous ; a wild wind had sprung up, and was rocking the trees backwards and forwards, and swaying their tops till they nearly touched the earth. The clouds flew overhead with a swiftness no eye could measure, and the distant murmur of rain approached nearer and nearer, until it sounded almost like a roar, and in less than five minutes had blotted out the whole of the surrounding view, and was falling, like bucketsful, on the spot where Cecilia was standing.

Shelter there was none, until the plain was recrossed. The water fell in such a deluge that

before she could gain any cover from the trees she was nearly wet through. The boy, now thoroughly frightened, began to cry, and Cecilia herself could not but feel uneasy as to the result of her present adventure. After seeking out the thickest tree, she took off from the horse's back a shawl which, happily, was strapped to the saddle, and, wringing all the wet she could out of her thin summer covering, she wrapped herself up in it.

The rain continued one unceasing downpour, until the drip through the trees was almost as bad as standing in the open air. So she called the boy to lead the horse, and once more went forward, hoping to find a more protected position. In this she succeeded : once again among the rocks, she found a kind of hollow under one of them, large enough for her to sit down in and for the boy to stand in, while the horse remained outside.

After continuing here about an hour, the rain ceased, but was followed by so thick a mist that Cecilia felt it would be madness to move from where she was ; she could only now trust to what the Grants might do when her absence was discovered, and summon up all her patience and courage for the waiting.

Though still early enough to be quite light in

the plains, the sun had got behind the high mountain-tops, and the heavy mist, adding to the gloom, made it appear much later than it really was. Very heavily the time passed, and a dreary feeling of exhaustion crept over Cecilia. The excitement of the storm had all passed away, there was nothing now to prevent her realising her exact position, and that its best possible termination could only be reached after perhaps many hours of weary suspense.

The Grants had a merry time as they pursued the downward route, with the exception of poor Mrs. Grant, who found it even more difficult to remain on her horse than she had during the ascent; but Teddy volunteered to remain by her side, and supported much more by his high spirits than by any muscular aid he could give, she did her best not to let her own discomfort interfere with the enjoyment of the others.

They entirely escaped the rain, which was confined to the higher level of the mountain, and though the thunder somewhat tried the nerves of the girls, that very fact roused Mrs. Grant to put a good face on the matter, and at least to appear not to mind it.

As they approached Grindlewald, the way was bordered on either side by barberry-bushes,

covered with their ripe red berries, and the noise of the grasshoppers almost silenced the voices of the young people, as they listened, both astonished and delighted.

On entering the hotel, having secured beds, they ordered tea at once, and without making much change in their dress, passed into the *salle à manger*. There were only two other occupants of the room, who had already finished their evening meal, and were engaged in determining what they would do on the morrow. They looked up as the Grants entered, when a mutual recognition ensued, and with the freemasonry that belongs to travelling, mutual bows passed, and were followed by a brisk flow of questions and answers, as to what had happened on either side since they had last spent a day together.

The two strangers were no other than Mr. Wymerly and Mr. Frank Summers, who recognised in the Grants the party with whom they had travelled the whole day after leaving Calais. Frank Summers was delighted to meet them, and at once made himself most agreeable to every one, volunteering every kind of assistance that might be requisite, and giving an amount of information, of such doubtful value that Mr.

Wymerly was more than once just on the point of interfering.

The Nile journey had long been given up. Frank had found Mr. Wymerly a somewhat dull companion ; his own very high spirits were kept constantly checked by the gravity of Mr. Wymerly's countenance. If Mr. Wymerly had been confidential, Frank would not have cared, he would have sympathised with him, and would have done his best to turn the current of his thoughts ; but Mr. Wymerly was not a man to be confidential about defeat, so he was silent and grave, and in consequence Frank felt no inclination to make the longer expedition in his company, and all the more so, as every place they passed through was entirely new and full of interest to him.

So it came to pass that they lingered on in Switzerland with no settled plans, doing each day what they felt inclined, and only looking sufficiently forward to arrange every evening in what direction they should go on the morrow.

With the happy *insouciance* of young people, and the distraction caused by this unexpected meeting, Cecilia's absence seemed entirely forgotten until the landlord entered, and said that the man with the horses wanted to see Mr. Grant ; but Mr. Grant was in no inclination to

move, and he kept the man waiting at least half-an-hour before seeing him. When at last he went out, and Stefan informed him that the young lady had not yet arrived, it was with no slight anxiety that Mr. Grant heard him, and recollected how entirely he had neglected all protection of Miss Moorton.

Stefan said he had waited a good hour, but it was growing dark; there had been a storm; these storms were always followed by mists; nothing was more confusing than these mists; his boy was young; he should not like to lose his horse, it was a valuable beast; and he thought no more time should be lost before going in search of the young lady.

While they were talking, Teddy had joined them, and hearing what the man said, returned hastily to the *salle*, and told them all about it. Every one rose, and went with him to the door of the hotel, where Mr. Grant was talking with the man. Mr. Wymerly, Frank Summers, and Teddy said they would go with Stefan, and without further delay they started, leaving the others not a little sobered by the intelligence of the mishap. Stefan particularly begged that they should all keep together until they reached the very spot where the first mistake had taken place, which speedily occurred to him as the

possible explanation of the non-appearance of the party. Once there, they would divide and search in all directions.

It was now quite dark. The moon had not yet risen above the mountain tops, and when it did, would only be visible for a short time, until it sank behind them on the opposite side of the narrow valley; and as they ascended they entered the thick mist which had settled down on everything around, and prevented them seeing more than a few yards before them. They went along in perfect silence, every one anxious, with an unexpressed fear at their heart as to what at any moment they might come upon, until, having reached a place where they were to divide, Stefan called a halt, and they all stood still.

He then directed Mr. Wymerly to start in one direction, Mr. Summers in another, but kept Teddy with himself. He did not believe the boy could be of any use, and might only add to their perplexities by getting himself into difficulties. Before they separated Stefan raised his voice, and turning round in the three directions where the search was to be made, jodelled loud for at least five minutes. They were all to return to the spot whence they started.

As hour after hour passed in the place where

Cecilia had taken refuge, and the daylight gradually faded until it was quite dark, the exhaustion from want of food was added to the depressing influences of her position. Her little companion had fallen asleep on the ground, and thus losing all control over the horse, Cecilia was forced to take the reins into her own hands to prevent his straying. This in itself was rather a good thing for her ; it varied the monotony of waiting, and obliged her to move continually with the restlessness of the horse, while endeavouring to appease his hunger by cropping everything within his reach.

In the busy life of the nineteenth century, with its continually increasing love of change, and consequent *ennui* when that love of change is not unceasingly gratified, there are few things which so impress the mind with a sense of its own impotence, with the feeling that its power is limited by irresistible might, as the blank certainty of having done all that lies within your capability, and that nothing remains but to wait. Nothing which so hushes the heart and keeps the limbs from moving when the onward course of any man or woman is suddenly stopped, and the unit is overwhelmed by standing isolated from human help, alone with itself for an unknown length of time.

Cecilia was astounded at her own restlessness, and she asked herself again and again why she should mind being out in a shower on the side of a mountain for a few hours. On such a well-known pass as this, she was quite certain of being found again ; she did not believe that she had wandered as far wrong as she even had ; and though it was cold and dull, what was that ? she had often been both at Moorton Manor. Face to face with the mighty unknown forces that worked on, irrespective of the human heart that beat near them, and the clever brain that vainly sought to read the riddle of their being, she simply felt appalled at the presumption which makes man, the head of creation, to do the best he can during a short span of life, and then to be only gathered to the dust whence he sprang. It was the mental restlessness originating in an unsatisfied moral want which tortured Cecilia in those silent hours, and she wrestled with her hopes and fears until she wearied for some external change to place her once more in a living world, and enable her to forget the hopeless personal idols who are their own devotees.

But the thick mist crept closer, and the one shawl was no longer able to keep out the chill of her wet clothes. Cecilia began to shiver, and

to dread something different from the spectres that had been setting themselves up before her. She rose and stood by the horse. He felt so warm, she leaned against him that she might share his warmth ; she felt getting more and more sleepy, but she stood resolutely, that it might not gain upon her, when just as she was upon the point of losing consciousness, she heard a distant jodel.

Her heart gave a joyful leap, and she tried to return the sound, but she was so chilled and exhausted her voice had no power. What could she do ? She roused the sleeping boy, who, as soon as he heard the sound, grinned from ear to ear, and opening his mouth, returned such an answering call, that Cecilia put her hands to her ears. This so delighted him, that he continued to raise notes still more shrill, which she dare not check.

There was a pause at last, when the boy's breath failed him, a moment's listening, and their jodel was returned.

The boy was for rushing forward, but Cecilia kept him back ; they should not be lost twice. They did not wait long, however, when the breaking down of boughs were heard, and the next minute Stefan, Mr. Wymerly, and Teddy stood before them.

It would not be easy to describe Mr. Wymerly's astonishment when he saw who it was they had come in search of. As to Cecilia, her revulsion of feeling was so overpowering, it was all she could do to preserve her self-command. Teddy fairly danced for joy, and Stefan, though less demonstrative, looked almost as pleased, especially as he found his horse none the worse for a few hours abstinence.

In a few minutes Cecilia was again upon the horse, who, apparently conscious he was going towards food and stabling, trotted off at a pace which was only kept within the capacity of the walkers by the nature of the ground. It was far easier for the horse to carry than for Cecilia to be carried. There was a considerable distance still to be gone, and after some very rough jolting, she looked so exhausted, that Stefan proposed that he and his biggest boy, who had come up after them, should make a chair for her with their hands, and carry her down the rest of the way.

At first she declined the offer, but beginning to feel it almost impossible to sit any longer on the horse, she at last accepted it. This once arranged, they proceeded at a swinging pace, and with an amount of ease to herself that was almost exhilarating, so that when Grindlewald

was reached at last, she was able to listen to and answer the torrent of questions and suggestions with which the whole of the Grants overwhelmed her.

Mrs. Grant received her with a motherly interest that quite touched her. The whole contents of the precious bag were at once put at her service ; she made her some hot tea, and finally carried her off to bed ; nor would she leave her until Cecilia was warmly tucked in, and she had placed everything possible or impossible for her to want that she could think of within her reach.

Cecilia was very grateful to her for all this, and perhaps still more so when the door closed and she was left alone. She was weary beyond description, with her brain far too much excited to allow her to rest. The room in which she was, was sufficiently large to be pleasant, but when the lights were extinguished she felt as if the ceiling came down close upon her, and the space about her took the dimensions of the small shelter in the rock where she had passed such weary hours.

After tossing about for some time, and getting more miserable every minute, she got up and lighted one of Mrs. Grant's nightlights, which brought with it such a sense of amusement, as

she thought over the other contents of the bag, as, together with the cheerful influence of the light, greatly assisted her finally falling asleep. But her rest was uneasy and disturbed, and when the morning light broke into the room, she awoke in a state of high fever.

With the kind intention of not disturbing her, no one was allowed to go near her until about ten o'clock, and then Mary Grant crept into her room, hoping to find her still asleep, but she quickly went in search of her mother after one look at Cecilia's face, whose flushed cheeks and restless eyes told of anything but rest and sleep.

The result of remaining so many hours in her wet dress and without food was a sharp attack of fever, which kept her to her bed for many days.

It was, of course, impossible to leave her there alone ; so, after a consultation, it was settled that Mr. Wymerly should go over to Interlachen and let the Trevors know how matters stood, and that until his return the Grants would remain where they were, Mrs. Grant saying that of course it was right they should know, but that there was no reason at all why Mrs. Trevor should come ; that she should be only too glad to nurse Miss Moorton, for whom she had taken a great liking, and that Mr. Grant and the children

might, meanwhile, go on wherever they liked, and she could rejoin them afterwards.

So Mr. Wymerly departed, with Frank Summers, to bring their unwelcome news. Mr. Trevor was greatly shocked, and blamed himself immensely for having allowed Cecilia to go off with entire strangers, who might not know how to take proper care of her. And as soon as it was possible on the following day, he and Mrs. Trevor hastened to Grindlewald.

Their presence, of course, relieved the Grants from all responsibility ; but Mrs. Grant insisted on remaining to look after Cecilia, and sent the others off, while she devoted herself to the invalid with an unwearied kindness that was as advantageous to her as it was a relief to Mrs. Trevor, who was only too glad to leave all the real work to be done by others, she herself doing the much easier part of asking questions and showing sympathy.

Mr. Staunton was just on the point of leaving for an excursion to Mont Blanc when Mr. Wymerly reached Interlachen with Frank Summers. It was soon settled that the three gentlemen should join forces. There was just sufficient time left at Frank's disposal, before returning to England, to enable him to do this, and as Mr. Staunton also intended shortly to be at home

again, the probability was that they might proceed thither together. Mr. Wymerly, however, promised to return to Interlachen, where the Trevors would be as soon as they were able to remove Cecilia.

It was a dull time for Mr. Trevor while detained at Grindlewald. Had he been there by himself, he would have proved an excellent nurse, and have found plenty to do ; but, with two ladies, one of whom nominally and the other really undertook the care of Cecilia, there was nothing left for him but to make the most of whatever was to be seen in the immediate neighbourhood. This was all very well for a few days, but at the end of that time Mr. Trevor was reduced to find amusement in whatever travellers might pass that way. There was constant change, no one spending more than one night there ; but, for the most part, they were a very uninteresting set : until one day an Englishman, who had sat apart silently reading the *Times* during the whole evening, on rising to leave the room left it upon the table ; whereupon Mr. Trevor secured it, and, finding it not more than ten days old, sat down to devour it as a schoolboy does a piece of cake. There was little of much interest in it, except the continually increasing signs of discontent amongst the rural population, at the rate of

wages the farmers thought sufficient for them to live upon. The tide of opposition to the present state of things was evidently rising, with a strength that would make itself felt; and Mr. Trevor was far too wise a man not to be aware that when the agricultural labourers once knew the power of their position, that their demands if reasonable, must be conceded, whatever the amount of annoyance or inconvenience it might entail upon their employers. It was curious into what a different world this copy of the *Times* at once took Mr. Trevor, and afforded him plenty to think about for many succeeding days. There was also one small paragraph, headed, "Fatal poaching affray," which caught his attention, a fight having taken place in the neighbourhood of Powdridge Court, resulting in the death of a poacher, and serious injury to a game-keeper. No names were given, but the affair was said to have been attended by unusually touching and distressing circumstances, which it was hoped would be taken up by the Liberal interest, and help to bring about an alteration of the law.

Mr. Trevor was a born politician, though circumstances had prevented his taking anything but an active local interest in public affairs. These words now fired him; he longed to be

back again, and busy in ascertaining the real evils attendant upon the position of the labourers of England ; but that could not be at present. It was, however, a source of great satisfaction to him that he should before long be joined by Mr. Wymerly, that they might fully discuss these questions, and concert together what future action it was well to take.

The most tedious pauses in life end at last, and after a fortnight's detention, Cecilia was sufficiently recovered to make it not only possible, but advisable, to move her. So they first returned to Interlachen, whence Mrs. Grant was fetched by Teddy, to join the rest at Brienz. And after a few days rest Mr. and Mrs. Trevor and Cecilia proceeded to Thun, leaving word for Mr. Wymerly, who had not yet made his appearance, where to join them.

CHAPTER XII.

POLITICAL EDUCATION.

THERE'S a charming hotel at Thun, surrounded by an extensive garden which reaches down to, and runs along the side of the lake for some way. Here the Trevors and Cecilia took rooms for a month, in order to give the latter plenty of time to recover. The air was far fresher than at Interlachen, and the nearer surroundings more cheerful, so that the whole party were very well pleased at the change, and looked forward with much pleasant expectation to the time they might spend there.

The evening of the third day after their arrival, Mr. Wymerly rejoined them, looking far brighter than he had done for a long while. The excursion to Mont Blanc had proved so great a success that they had crossed over into Italy, and had been spending a few days on the

lakes. This had run their time so close that Mr. Staunton and Frank Summers had to travel night and day in order to be back in time at their respective places, otherwise they would have accompanied Mr. Wymerly as far as Thun. Mr. Staunton had by this time forgiven Cecilia for causing him to be guilty of an indiscretion in conversation. That form of weakness, in his opinion, stamped a man as a very poor thing. He would have far rather said a rude than an indiscreet thing, and that such a woman as Cecilia should have led him into doing so, had given him an amount of annoyance that was very comic. Mr. Wymerly's presence always acted upon him as a stimulant, to which the addition of Frank Summers added not a little. During the time these men were together, there were few subjects that did not come under discussion, and often in a very brilliant manner. The greater earnestness which Mr. Wymerly contributed inciting Mr. Staunton to more startling negations, trenchant opposition, and bewildering difficulties, which, when they had arrived at some hopeless climax, were speedily dissolved into broad farce by Frank Summers. From cigars to such trifles as time and eternity, the range of their discussions extended—the nature of the two last being laid down with as

much undoubting confidence as though you could bridge over the former, and identify the latter through your telescope. This intellectual exercise had been of great use to Mr. Wymerly. The absolute freedom of speech in which they all indulged, prevented the possibility of personal condemnation, and gave a reality to their discussions, however absurd might be the conclusions at which they arrived, that was of the highest value to intellectual honesty. Its bracing effect was purely good, and more conducive to the mental humility that recognises the limits of intelligence than any possible subjection of man's understanding to authority can ever be.

These three knew often that they were talking sheer nonsense, but they talked about it as persistently as if it were sense, and rose with minds invigorated by having said just what they thought and felt, and less than ever inclined to accept as final, conclusions based upon evidence far too incomplete to support more than a temporary theory.

Had there been any one present who had looked either pained or ashamed at what was said, the chances are they would have defended their most indefensible approaches, and taken final stand in a fortress built of glass.

Mr. Wymerly's spirits rose in this atmosphere of freedom and fun. He once more began to believe in a possible future for himself, and was very glad of the chance of spending a few days with the Trevors at Thun, before resuming, what he could not but consider, the weary fight against the petty evils incident to the position of a landed proprietor, uncheered by domestic sympathy.

At the bottom of the hotel garden there was a convenient landing-place for the boats, which could be hired to make excursions on the lake. From it you mounted by some rather steep steps, until you found yourself upon a terrace. The view from this terrace was as beautiful as extensive. It was Cecilia's delight to be there, but she was still so weak that a couch was brought down each day from the hotel, on which she could lie the greater part of the day, regaining strength and enjoying everything about her. She had not seen Mr. Wymerly the night of his arrival, having already retired, but the following morning she had not been long established on her sofa, when, returning from an early row on the lake, as he ascended the steps, he perceived her not far off, and was soon with her, making inquiries about her recovery.

They were both really pleased to meet. Mr.

Wymerly sat down beside her, and talked in a very amusing manner about the excursion he had just made, and his two companions. All reference to the Castletons was carefully avoided on both sides, and so it happened that Mr. Wymerly continued in ignorance of the real state of things, and supposed that the marriage by this time had taken place.

"I hope I have not tired you," said Mr. Wymerly, as he rose to go.

"Oh, no," replied Cecilia. "It is a charity to talk to me, a far pleasanter way of being amused than by reading."

"Do you stay much longer here?"

"Yes, some weeks."

"Then I may hope for further opportunities of 'amusing' you before I leave for England," said Mr. Wymerly, with a smile. "It is delightful to be able to be of any use to any one. I should be proud to believe I could be better than nobody to you."

After this day, Cecilia, Mr. Trevor, and Mr. Wymerly were constantly together. There was no reason why the latter should hasten his departure, and he found his quarters far too agreeable to be in any hurry to do so. Cecilia regained strength every day, and was just as happy as she could be in such beautiful scenery,

with two such pleasant companions. One evening, when the light from the setting sun had faded from the lake, and the opposite mountains stood shrouded in the mystery which darkness throws over everything, and the stars were shining brilliantly in the cloudless sky, the air still so warm and dry no extra wraps were needed, after a long silence, during which each one of the above-named trio had been enjoying the moments after their own fashion, sitting in the garden, Mr. Trevor broke the silence, by saying :

"These hours of idleness are very pleasant, but when they come to an end, and you are once more at home, Wymerly, it will not do to let the grass grow under our feet. If the Liberals were better organised, I think we could make a far better fight the next opportunity that may be given us. Now that you have come to live amongst us, I feel there would be a chance for our party, which it would be a sin to let slip."

"A very poor chance, I am afraid," said Mr. Wymerly.

"I think you are mistaken there. You see for some time all the Moorton property has been in abeyance, as far as its political influence goes, and the tenant farmers have voted pretty nearly as they were asked. They are very ignorant. The late Mr. Stewart was a lay figure, as far as

broad political views go ; but he took care of local interests so well that it was hopeless to rouse any opposition to him with the means in our hands. Carlyle is a different man. I expect we shall find he will simply do nothing, and the do-nothing system will only last a short time. A new active young man like yourself has a grand opportunity before him, if he will only work it well."

"I feel very much disabused about political chances and theories. What can one man do in the midst of so much ignorance and stolid indifference ?"

"Rouse the indifference, and educate the ignorance."

"I doubt whether I have sufficient patience to play the schoolmaster."

"There is nothing to be done that can in any shape help your fellow-creatures without patience, and I suppose you only repudiate its exercise in the field of politics because you think it will be necessary in some other useful direction ?"

"I am afraid I repudiate it from less worthy motives. The fact is, Mr. Trevor, I have began to doubt both the feasibility of enlightening the lower classes, and the necessity of troubling one's self about them."

"Indeed! There are two questions I have been quite looking forward to your taking up. They are two, about which I should think few Liberals would doubt as to their importance, and I hoped to find in your young blood the persistency necessary for their ventilation. But my hobbies may have no interest for you."

"I suppose every man has, during his life, a succession of hobbies, and that it is only when he finds out, either their worthlessness or their hopelessness, that he ceases to take up new ones. You will laugh at me, but I feel I have come to the end of mine, and must look at you as an enthusiastic youngster."

"Mr. Trevor's mind," said Cecilia, "will always remain young."

"I am not in the least surprised at your present state of disgust," resumed Mr. Trevor. "At your age I felt the same. It is hard to work without seeing the result of your labour; it is not given to many men to do so; but in most cases, though the end to which you have looked does not arrive, yet in its place unexpected results do take place, and sometimes produce more valuable effects than those we have been working for."

"That might give some interest to the game," said Mr. Wymerly, looking at Cecilia.

She, however, did not notice his look, so he continued, turning to Mr. Trevor :

"I shall be very glad to hear what your views are, and if it is possible to lash myself up into working for them. But it is only fair you should know my actual sceptical condition."

"Oh I do not mind that at all. It is something to have been capable of belief. You could not be disappointed if you had not once had hopes of your fellow creatures. All I have to do is resuscitate them."

"I am all attention," said Mr. Wymerly, with mock gravity.

"Hobby number one is the alteration of the game-laws."

Mr. Wymerly gave a low whistle.

"I might as well, alone, oppose the army of the Emperor of all the Rooshias."

"Hobby number two is the political education of the people by giving them the franchise."

"Thank you, Mr. Trevor. You have put two trifling labours before me. Both of them absolutely impracticable, so now let's have a little talk about them."

"With all my heart."

"First and foremost, how can you propose to give the franchise to the agricultural clodhopper

when it is withheld from ladies of education and refinement ?”

Cecilia laughed, Mr. Trevor looked amused, and turning to her said, “I think our friend has been partially educated himself, already, don’t you ?”

“Well,” said Mr. Wymerly, “what is your answer ?”

“That I would take what I can get, when I can have it. That enlightened young gentlemen feel a rivalry between their undisputed sway in the field political, and the influence there of ‘ladies of education and refinement,’ which might seriously lessen the height of the pedestal upon which self-appreciation has hitherto placed them. A rivalry which is not felt with uneducated clodhoppers.”

“That is a very hard hit at me, but it is true. I am being educated. I have been experiencing what I never did before this summer—the greatly increased interest it gives to politics to be able to talk them over with a lady who really understands the questions at issue,” said Mr. Wymerly, bowing to Cecilia.

“I suppose I ought to be glad that you have progressed so far ?” said Cecilia ; “but I cannot take it as a compliment to be thus made exceptional to the rest of my sex.”

"Nor is it one, I quite agree with you, Cecilia," said Mr. Trevor. "But you must remember it has its origin in the narrow experience of men. The women, they may have known, stand to them for what women are ; and it is only too true that at present women's interests are to a lamentable extent limited to their homes and families."

"I suppose that is so ; but thanks to you, I cannot remember the time when all the questions of the day were not far more to me than most other interests. So much so, indeed, that I find it difficult to believe they are not equally so to all other women."

"But this is a digression," said Mr. Wymerly. "And now, I ask, how can you expect me to labour to get the franchise for men far too ignorant to be able to use it?"

"I have two answers to that. In the first place, I expect you to do your best to educate the ignorant. There are many questions of great importance which can be put before simple-minded men in a way which shall enable them to understand their general bearings, though they may be unable to master their detail, or even the questions themselves, unless they are thus simplified for them. If you *talk* to an uneducated man, you can make him un-

derstand a great many things which would remain Greek to him, if he tried to master them through reading. What a wide field this at once opens up to any man of education who really cares for the progress of his country. If you are a good landlord, you will have no want of hearers, the difficulty will be, lest they trust you too implicitly. My second answer is, uneducated people are often very shrewd judges of the broad lines of character. A man's fame in his own neighbourhood is generally sound. It is far better to return a man who is known to his constituents than one who is a stranger, as a general rule. So putting aside the value of measures as judged by the voters, the value of the man is perhaps even more important, and that is pretty sure to be known. It does not do to bind a member down to measures; even we, enlightened voters, must be content to trust to a man's general principles."

"That is an excellent theory, but I find my principles have given great offence. By your rule I ought to feel myself judged soundly, and condemned."

"You are too new a man at present. I know to what you refer. When you have been a number of years at Wharton House your constituents will find that justice is, in the long

run, worth more than generosity. At present it only appears to them as a denial of rights. When a new man comes with principles of a higher nature than those to which those he comes amongst have hitherto looked up, he is always misjudged at first ; but that is an opportunity for him if he rightly uses it, instead of turning away in disgust."

"It may be so, but the unfortunate new man will not have a bed of roses under such conditions."

"Aye, there's the rub. You magnificent gentlemen who undertake both to know and do what is best, also intend to roll along life's highway in a grand carriage, with first-rate springs, and wheels covered with gutta-percha, scattering wisdom on roseleaf tracts to an admiring multitude. So the first tiny pebble that gives a jolt, pulls you up at once. The would-be divinity descends from his machine, and prefers to sleep under the hedge rather than encounter another such terrific obstacle."

"I hope you do not think I am quite so faint-hearted as all that," said Mr. Wymerly, with a little pique in his tone.

"I should be sorry to believe it, even at your own valuation, but, remember, it was you who spoke so much about the difficulties. That

they will be constant, not even intermitting, to the true worker, I know, perhaps, even better than you ; but for them you should be prepared, and not look at them as difficulties, but as a part of the material which has to be used up."

"It is much pleasanter sitting in the garden here," said Mr. Wymerly, in an intensely lazy tone.

"But when the winter comes it will not be so," said Cecilia.

"True enough. I am so glad you reminded me this pleasant time must of necessity come to an end," said Mr. Wymerly. "Then next winter I will be prepared for action if you will continue my education."

"Perhaps Mr. Trevor will tell us now about his future game-laws," said Cecilia.

"I doubt whether I am a true Liberal on that question, Miss Moorton. I never could yet see why a man should not preserve his game if he likes."

"I am quite ready to admit that is true as an abstract proposition," said Mr. Trevor, "but the preservation of game brings with it consequences which removes it altogether from the position of an abstract proposition. You never will make an uneducated hungry man believe he has not a right to snare rabbits and hares, or shoot any

wild bird that will make a supper for himself and family."

"But when I have sufficiently educated them, don't you think they might know it?" asked Mr. Wymerly ironically.

"Perhaps so; but I assure you this is anything but a matter for a joke. Now I'll tell what has come under my own observation. Carlyle has given, nominally, a number of garden allotments for labouring men; the land is good, and the size of each piece sufficient to make a very important addition to a poor man's income. Now at this time four-fifths of those allotments are held by small tradesmen, and domestic servants, gardeners, grooms, and game-keepers, instead of those for whom they were intended, and why? because their tenancy was hampered by the condition that no head of game straying on the land might be destroyed. The allotments lie close to well-preserved woods, and entirely open to them. They are at times overrun with game. Of course it has been destroyed. The original allottees have, one by one, been ejected in consequence, and the land given to creatures and friends of the head bailiff, whose misdeeds in the way of destruction are overlooked, for the consideration which they pay to the landlord's steward.

"There is a regularly organised gang of poachers in that neighbourhood, who not only snare the game themselves, for which they are punished when they do it on their own account, but also snare it for the holders of these allotments, when it is overlooked, and whose tables are more regularly supplied with game, than that of Carlyle himself. This is merely one phase of the question. It takes a hundred different shapes in other neighbourhoods, and you will admit nothing could be well more demoralising than such a centre of forbidden and attractive amusements and daring."

"It must be very bad, certainly."

"Of course all the idle lads take their turn in the fun. I am told it pays remarkably well, so you cannot wonder at its being preferred to a day's work."

"Does Mr. Carlyle know of this?" said Mr. Wymerly, with some difficulty bringing out the name.

"I really cannot say; but the really important person is the steward. As long as he permits it, and possesses his master's confidence, the thing will continue."

At this moment Mrs. Trevor's maid came to say that her mistress wanted to speak to Mr. Trevor, who went off, saying :

"I dare say I shall soon be back. It seems quite a pity to go in, such a night as this."

"Mr. Trevor has certainly made out a very bad state of things," said Mr. Wymerly, "and he knows how to show up one's disinclination for difficult work in a very humiliating way; but my real difficulty, which I feel ashamed to own to such a firm believer in some things, is just this, that you cannot work unless sustained by some hope, and that at this moment I feel absolutely disabused of all hope. When I came here ten days ago, I began to fancy I could work again; but these days of enjoyment have seemed to me the only realities—the outside beautiful world, the inside intercourse with valued friends—and everything else a vain delusion. I feel regret for the past, no hope for the future, and only too thankful to be able to enjoy the present. Do you very much despise me for saying this?"

"No, not at all," said Cecilia, in a low voice; "but I pity you very much."

There was a short silence, broken by Mr. Wymerly's saying:

"Do you indeed pity me? perhaps you would cease to do so, if you only knew how pitiable I am."

"You should not say such a thing as that,

Mr. Wymerly, unless you wish to make me out a contemptible being."

"I do not know that; if I were to tell a man the real cause of my present indifference, he would tell me it was a phase, a mental condition I should get over, that in time I should do very well without all I have lost; but I have no right to trouble you with this, I do not know why I have said even what I have."

"Do you not dwell too much upon a temporary disappointment?—a lost election is not a lost world."

"Oh, it is not that; I should be sorry for you to think it was such a trifle," said Mr. Wymerly hastily.

"I do not suppose I can be of any use to you, if you cannot help yourself," said Cecilia, with unconscious satire; "but I should be very glad to hear anything that it might be a relief to you to say."

"May I really tell you something about myself?"

"I am very fond of stories, but you seem so prosperous, I find it hard to believe that you have many trials."

"Some years ago, for a short time, I had an object in life. I was a poor man, contented to be so, until by hard work I had enabled myself

to offer a home to any one who might care to share it. I believed in myself, I believed in others. Now I have got a home, without any labour of my own, and I have lost everything else. The most intimate friend I have is Staunton; he is such a delightful companion that I have never wished for anything better, until now. There is nothing we have not discussed together, and there is nothing which we have not destroyed in these discussions, until there is nothing left for us to believe in. He is contented with this; his life has been singularly prosperous, in accordance with his tastes. He desires nothing further, and laughs at the dissatisfaction I experience in the face of having nothing, believing nothing, hoping nothing. You think for yourself. Do you do the same? Are you so penetrated with the spirit of the times, as to believe that nothing is equal to everything, or have I shocked you past recall by what I have said?"

Cecilia made no reply; for some minutes she seemed struggling with strong feeling, and a crowd of thoughts, till Mr. Wymerly said:

"Have I made myself a monster in your eyes?"

"Oh no, no; but you have touched a chord in me which has been out of tune lately, and given me more pain than I ever felt before in

my life. It is odd, but Mr. Staunton gave me to understand that his belief was of a very negative character, and I should find it difficult to express what appears to me the hopeless prose of such views as his. Surely," continued Cecilia, warming with the subject, "the hour in which to test a man's principles is the hour of trial, solitary trial, without the support or presence of any friend; when, if the humanitarians are right, you are yourself the greatest living thing, with no future before you beyond your present existence, and nothing to reconcile you to the void in your heart, and the failure of your endeavours, except that you were too weak for the struggle. What should a man do under these circumstances but shoot himself with the nearest gun? So far from thinking you a monster, Mr. Wymerly, either for your doubts or your discontents, I have shared the first too much not to know both their value and their pains, and for the latter I have but one name. It is a noble discontent. I will tell you what Mr. Trevor once said to me, after a conversation that took place this summer at my house, when Mr. Staunton had been brilliantly destructive. It struck me very much at the time: 'This modern form of asceticism is very curious: the old one was the annihilation of the

body, the modern materialist destroys the soul ; but depend upon it, my dear, we cannot do without both.' ”

“ Your words are as grateful to me as sunshine. Surely those must have heads only, and no hearts, who can condemn us to ourselves and this present existence alone.”

“ The heart seems in general to be at a sad discount where knowledge is concerned, yet it is equally a part of our being, and why it is to be distrusted *more* than the head, it would be difficult to prove.”

“ Now you will understand how it is that with every possible ideal smashed, I feel I cannot try, nor care, to work for my fellow-creatures.”

“ I do, and I entirely sympathise with you.”

“ Why should I work hard and deny myself pleasures, to raise the nature or existence of the low organisations that dwell in country neighbourhoods, if their existence and improvement is to terminate for ever after a brief summer or winter's day, and in the majority of cases it will be the latter, like the insects that dance in the air, and then are seen no more ? *Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*”

“ No, indeed ; it would be labour lost, very similar to tread-wheel work.”

Two or three stars shot in succession across the sky, with their wonderfully weird beauty, at this moment.

After they had passed, Mr. Wymerly—said, “Did they do it of themselves, Miss Moorton?” Cecilia gave a low sweet laugh.

“We must go in now, Mr. Wymerly—at least, I must, but pray don’t let me bring you in.”

After accompanying Cecilia to the house, Mr. Wymerly turned back again, and paced the garden for a couple of hours before the new hopes that were springing within him would allow him to rest.

When Mr. Trevor joined his wife in the house, he was received with, “You’ll excuse me, my dear, but it will never take place if politics are the only subject the young people are allowed to discuss.”

“To think of sending for me in only for that. You’ve no idea how important it is Wymerly should be active when he returns home.”

“Perhaps so, but not half so important as the other thing.”

Mr. Trevor laughed, and Mrs. Trevor handing to him some letters that had just arrived, he was contented to remain.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEWS FROM HOME.

AND when Cecilia went to bed that night, what were her thoughts? That he was a fellow-sufferer with herself. Oh, potent snare!—a man full of noble wishes and high desires, paralysed by having broken with the old faith, without having found anything to replace it in harmony with the criteria of the day. She knew that the same fatal indecision had been creeping over herself.

“We,” she said mentally, and then corrected it to “‘No one’—can care about any thing unless he feels he is acting in accordance with a noble design, that the result of ages may explain, but which he knows, only too well, he cannot. And for that noble design there must be a Power higher than man, and equally, a future for its fulfilment.”

- She was puzzled by Mr. Wymerly's half-confidence, and would have very much liked to ask him whether the reports about him and Miss Castleton were true, but of course it was out of the question to do so ; and though she did feel more sympathy with him than she had yet done for any other person, with the exception of Mr.
- Trevor, yet she felt perfectly sure it was nothing beyond intellectual agreement, and similar views of life and its objects. And she might give herself up to the pleasure of it without the slightest fear of danger to her own happiness. It would indeed be delightful to have such a neighbour, and if in any way she could help to keep him uninfluenced by Mr. Staunton's opinions, it would give an interest to her life that would be worth having.

ThenextmorningMrs.Trevor'smaidcametotell her that breakfast had been ordered in a private room, instead of, as usual, in the *salle*. This was so unwonted a proceeding that it greatly excited her curiosity, and she hastened her toilet the sooner to know its cause.

Mrs. Trevor seldom breakfasted with them : it was usually a *tête-à-tête* between Mr. Trevor and Cecilia ; so that she was not a little surprised, upon entering the room, to find both Mr. and Mrs. Trevor already there.

Going to Mrs. Trevor and kissing her, she exclaimed, "How early you are to-day! I am quite ashamed that you should be before me."

"Ah, my dear! both Mr. Trevor and myself have been lying awake the whole night, and this is the consequence."

"Lying awake!—but why?" asked Cecilia, looking hard at them both, and perceiving traces of strong emotion upon both their faces. "You never returned, as you promised, last night. I hope you have not had bad news?"

"Not what is commonly called such; but we have but one daughter, and we do not like to lose her."

"Helen!" exclaimed Cecilia.

Mr. Trevor here put into Cecilia's hand one of the letters that had arrived the preceding night.

"I would not give it you before, lest it should scare sleep away; but now you must know everything."

The letter ran as follows:

"MY DEAR PARENTS,—

"I am going to ask your permission for what I have quite made up my own mind about. Of course it is the right thing to do; and on no account would I do anything *hors de règle*. But I have begun by telling you I mean

to do it, in order to spare you all trouble in trying to prevent me. Dear mamma, do not be shocked at me. I should not be papa's daughter unless I knew what I meant to do ; and I really have been trying for the last half-hour to put what I want to say in the civilest way I could. Yet, somehow, I do not feel as if I had succeeded. Please, if you think me very wilful, ask Cecy to explain me ; she will make my intentions all clear.

“My last letter told you I was just leaving Brookhurst. I had the most delightful visit there. You know it is only four miles from where Mr. Summers lives ; his house is called only a farmhouse, but it is the nicest house in the world, whatever it may be called. There is a large greenhouse, always full of bright flowers ; and—what is far nicer—there is a large kennel full of the sweetest dogs you ever saw, with such wise noses, lovely eyes, and large soft-hanging ears ! I found them quite irresistible ; and when Mr. Summers said he hoped I would come over and see them as often as I liked, what could I do but go ? It was odd, considering how busy he says he is, that I never went there but I found him at home ; but I took no notice of it. You know men have a way of saying they are busy, when really they've nothing

in the world to do ; and I do believe Mr. Summers liked the amusement of Clara and my coming to see his kennel. Also, I must tell you, he was often over at Brookhurst, so there was nothing improper in our going to his farm—we were so very intimate.

“ But one day I was naughty. Clara had a headache and could not ride, and it was so lovely I could not bear to stay in ; so I ordered the horse, and without the bother of the groom, I set out for a ramble. There’s a lovely bit of wild heath near Mr. Summers’ farm, where the horse delights to gallop, and as I was putting her to her fastest paces, who should ride up but Mr. Summers himself, so we raced our horses one against the other for some time, and mine always won. Of course, the horses got a little hot, so Mr. Summers proposed we should walk them about a bit, until they cooled and while doing so—I can’t imagine what put it into his head—he asked me how soon you were coming back, and next—well, I really cannot remember what he said, but the upshot was that he had a beautiful mare that would carry a lady in first-rate style, and that he should be very glad if I would accept it—and that’s what I mean to do.

“ Your affectionate daughter,

“ H. TREVOR.

"P.S.—I am not sure I have made my meaning plain, but you must understand that the owner of the horse will be expected to live at the farm.

"How soon are you coming back?"

"And that child is fit to be a married woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Trevor, as Cecilia folded up the letter.

The tears stood in Mr. Trevor's eyes, and he looked hard at Cecilia as he received it back from her.

Cecilia was startled, well as she knew the flippant outside that Helen often assumed, because she could not bear anything approaching to what she called sentiment, yet she could not but feel a want in a letter written in that style, upon such an occasion. But she struggled hard against the feeling. Helen had appealed to her, and she would be loyal to her friend, even though she did not feel sure that the flippancy was *only* superficial, so she said :

"Dear little mamma, Mr. Summers is a very nice man, is he not? Could Helen have done better?"

"I am not sure that it is not better for a fool to marry a fool. At least, they do not tire of one another; even if Mr. Summers is everything

we could wish, what is it to me to feel that I must ask myself, 'Could not he have done better?'

"Helen is no fool," said Mr. Trevor.

"No indeed, that she is not," said Cecilia, with warmth. "Anything but that, and you know people have such very different ways of expressing themselves."

"How differently you would have written, Cecilia."

"Perhaps I should not have written at all, and you would not have liked that."

Mr. Trevor had been walking up and down the room, evidently much annoyed at the way his wife was speaking, which was at its height, when she added :

"I am sure you would though, my dear, and just the right letter. I really think it is my duty to give Mr. Summers an idea of the things he may expect from Helen. It would be deceiving him to let him marry her without doing so."

"Nay, Mary, that would never do. You will do nothing of the kind with my consent. He, surely, is the best judge whether Helen suits him or not."

"You always take Helen's part, whatever she says or does."

"I do not think it is necessary to take her part, as you call it, at all," replied Mr. Trevor, now really angry. "I believe Summers to be a thoroughly worthy man, and though the match may not be a brilliant one, if Helen likes him I shall certainly raise no objections."

"That is not the point," said Mrs. Trevor, "but I see you are both against me, so, of course, I must be wrong, and Helen may say what she pleases, as usual."— Mrs. Trevor then left the room.

As soon as she was gone, Cecilia said :

"How I wish I had been with Helen, and then I am sure I could have persuaded her just to leave out what dear Mrs. Trevor never has, and never will, understand in her."

"I wish so, too, my dear—the thing is just hopeless, they never will do anything but jar! What a strange thing—a mother unable to understand her own child!"

"I hope you're pleased?" said Cecilia, desirous of giving the conversation a pleasanter turn.

"I believe I am, but I've not had time yet to think about that. Since this unfortunate letter came, I've had to listen to little but poor Helen's shortcomings. I know well she's not a model young lady, and," added Mr. Trevor, with an approach to a smile, "I am not sure I like her

any the worse for that. She's the best I have. I shall miss her dreadfully, but if he makes her a good husband, she will be happier than she has yet been."

"I don't know that," said Cecilia, with over-much zeal; "she is devoted to you."

This sentence made Mr. Trevor laugh.

"Bless her, but love for a husband is a different thing, as I hope you'll know some day, my dear."

Mrs. Trevor now returned, and breakfast proceeded in a rather awkward silence, until Mr. Trevor said:

"Oh, I had a letter from the Vicar last night, which you will like to read, Cecy. I wrote to him from Grindlewald for information about that poaching affray I saw the account of in the *Times*. He has taken a long while to reply, but excuses himself on the ground of having been very busy. The letter is full of information."

And Mr. Trevor handed it to Cecilia.

She glanced at it, and then said:

"Oh, what a scrawl! You surely do not expect me to read that?"

What was it that made her feel the Vicar and the home-life miles away from her present interests, so that she really did not care to wade through the cramped handwriting.

"It is difficult, I confess, but as I have made it all out once, I will again, if you care to hear it?"

This offer Cecilia gladly accepted, as it broke fresh ground, and removed the *gêne* each one was feeling, though she wondered at herself how very little real interest she felt in the letter, when compared to Helen's, which had given so much offence.

The letter began by saying the pleasure it had given the writer to hear from Mr. Trevor, and his deep regret at Miss Moorton's indisposition, and continued: "Please tell her I have done my best to carry out her instructions, but there has been a great deal of illness and distress in the parish, and the results have been very much below my desires. I found that a day in Moorton Park was so popular, that it has been open to the villagers every Tuesday and Friday, without, I am happy to say, any mischief worth mentioning. I was particularly glad to be able to do so this year, as the long-continued heat has produced much sickness. I am afraid there is not much to be said for our drainage, and the wells having sunk unusually low, the want of water has been severely felt. In some parts the smells, in which the people pass their whole day, are very bad indeed, and

the result has been a low type of fever, which alarms me all the more, as, if we may believe the papers, we are threatened with a return of cholera. I have had little assistance amongst the poor; my sister has been at Powdridge Court, where my brother has been entertaining a house full of visitors, and required her presence, and really, had it not been so, I should scarcely have liked to have had her here during the last month.

"About the poaching affray I have a very bad story to tell you. I could wish there was no game in existence; it seems the origin of all rural vice." ("Rather a sweeping conclusion," said Mr. Trevor.) "I dare say you, or at least Miss Moorton, will remember a carpenter, John Rodgers, a very good workman, but he took up with Union men, and listened to all the stuff that mischievous Magog talked, and ended in drink, idleness, and disgrace. I suppose he had some feeling of shame, for he left the village about the time of the election, and went to Sheredale, where he got employment at various places. But his evil genius followed him there, in the shape of that same Magog, whose political economy is altogether at fault, but is so alluring to those who do not know any better, that I look upon him as a real nuisance. So John

came to believe it was the fault of the rich that he had to work at all, and whenever he made some money, which he could easily do, he spent it all at once at the public-house where Magog was lodging, thinking in doing so he was playing the part of a gentleman, who could do as he liked. I do not know how to make these men understand that poor gentlemen exercise a deal more self-denial than they do. If I ever say anything of the kind, it is received with that knowing smile which takes the place of the word 'gammon.'" ("Only think of the Vicar's using such a word as that!" said Cecilia.)

"There's a deal more shrewdness in the Vicar than he often gets credit for," said Mr. Trevor. But to resume :

"In the end, Rodgers got so bad a character for drunkenness and unpunctuality, that, in spite of his good work, no one would employ him at Sheredale. He then returned to Nunneley, and tried to persuade a very good girl, Susan Wood, to whom he was engaged, to marry him. But she had the sense to say 'No, John, you can't keep yourself; you certainly can't keep me.' So John went from bad to worse, until he suddenly appeared with a good coat on his back, and with money in his pocket, and apparently kept away from the public-house. He

told Susan Wood he had been made gamekeeper to my brother, and as all seemed fair and above-board, she consented to marry him. They were married about a month ago, and for a couple of weeks everything seemed going on as it should. John is a clever fellow, he made an active keeper, and kept others in order with much greater zeal than he had ever done himself; so much so, indeed, that he was soon cordially hated by some low fellows belonging to a regular gang of poachers in the neighbourhood. One of these was an ex-policeman, James Hardy, who had been dismissed the force for disorderly conduct, and I am grieved to add another was Peter Rigby. He conducted himself so well in jail, that he was let off the rest of his time, the authorities, and especially the chaplain, being convinced he sincerely repented the drunken ways which had brought him into trouble. So they let him out, he returned to his wife and child, went to see poor old Wilson, who received him as such a thoroughly good fellow was sure to do. I offered to reinstate him in the choir, as the best means of restoring his self-respect, and he spoke so well about it, that I quite hoped for his future.

“But when a man has once drunk as Rigby had, it becomes a physical disease. The

enforced abstinence in jail simply made him wild to return to the old stimulants, and no sooner was he out than he began to drink again, gently at first and I really believe with every intention of continuing it, but a week after he was out he had been dead drunk twice, and finally disappeared, no one for a time having the least idea where he was, with the exception, as it afterwards came out, of his wife and child. My brother has been having his house full of visitors for the shooting season, the preserves were in excellent condition, of which the poachers determined to have the advantage beforehand.

"On the 30th of August a large and determined band made a desperate raid on them. The keepers were on the alert, but few in number compared to the attacking party; a fierce fight ensued. Rigby and his wife, who had come to bring him his supper, and had remained watching the result, were both shot dead. Hardy was so badly wounded his life was despaired of, and Rodgers, though still alive, is a cripple for life, and was left for dead on the ground, some of the men who escaped having thrown him into a thick bit of brushwood to get him out of the way. It was a wonder he survived, and probably he would not have done so, but his poor wife,

going the next day in search of him, and not being able to find him, she thought of taking with her again a favourite dog which had belonged to John. This dog, when he took to bad ways, he had had to sell, and the very first thing he did after his marriage with Susan was to buy back his old friend.

“Accompanied by the faithful creature, Susan returned to the wood, and the dog went almost straight to the very spot where his master was lying, having come to himself, but quite unable to stir. I am told it was most affecting to see the animal's delight.

“My old Mary insisted on bringing poor little Polly here, where she can remain until something better can be found for her. Poor child, she does nothing but cry ; she was very fond of her father, and so pleased to have him out again.

“Of course, this miserable affair has produced a profound sensation in the village. Rightly or not, these things do help to set the labouring men against the rich. It is no use my saying, if the men did not touch what does not belong to them, they would not get into these straits. The feeling of the people is against men being shot for the sake of a few birds, and I must say I do not wonder at it. Of course, my brother

does not think so, and perhaps it could not be helped, but it did seem shocking, while these two persons were lying unburied, and two more unlikely to recover (Hardy has since died), that a large party should be enjoying themselves, where only two days previously such a tragedy had taken place.

"The whole affair has grieved me very much. It is bad enough for men to get into trouble through lawlessness, but that an innocent woman should come by her death so, is really too horrible. How it exactly happened, nobody knows, as it was an unusually dark night for the time of year; but of course the gamekeepers did not know she was there, and it is supposed she was mistaken for a man. Rodgers was so soon insensible that he has absolutely nothing to say about it. I cannot conclude without expressing a wish that you all should not return until the village is in a healthier condition."

"What a dreadful thing," said Cecilia; "but do you know, I really cannot see why people should take your partridges any more than your flowers."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Trevor. "How are we to get game for the table if they do?"

"It would be better to do without it," said Mr. Trevor, "rather than that men's lives should

be in danger for its preservation. But I think Cecilia's comparison contains the gist of the thing. Our wild flowers are gathered by any one crossing the land, but not our garden ones. In the same way birds seem to the poor, and still more hares and rabbits, to be in the same position as wild flowers."

"Oh," said Mrs. Trevor, "how can you say so, when you know all the expense and trouble to which landlords are put for the preservation of their game?"

"I did not mean it to be the real explanation, but the one which presents itself to the uneducated mind. Moreover, they look upon the trouble and expense to which you allude as an infringement of their rights."

Breakfast was now ended, and Cecilia and Mr. Trevor went into the garden, where they were soon after joined by Mr. Wymerly, greatly wondering why they had not been, as usual, in the public *salle*.

Cecilia was not sorry to have Mr. Trevor with her this morning. The interest she (as she put it to herself) felt in Mr. Wymerly's principles gave her, for the first time, a certain amount of consciousness in his presence which it was easier to her to forget with a third person present.

After reading the Vicar's letter, Mr. Wymerly said :

"What a capital fellow that Carlyle is ! There he is, working away in his parish, in the midst of all this annoyance and distress, without a thought of himself or any prospect of a holiday. And here am I, simply idling, speculating as to whether things are worth doing, and why they should be ; and whether the world is arranged in accordance with my ideas, while he is doing everything a man should do. It is very humiliating."

"But, Mr. Wymerly," said Cecilia, "don't you think Mr. Carlyle might have prevented some of this evil had he been wiser?"

"I should not have expected you to be so hard upon the Vicar," said Mr. Trevor. "No doubt Carlyle makes mistakes, but it is little enough one man can do towards the formation of opinion amongst ignorant minds, during a whole lifetime. And after all, are we not a little mad just now about correct opinions ? I fear we are in danger of forgetting that, at the best, our opinions can only be held as true relatively to the age in which we live, whilst obedience to duty is a permanent principle, within the power of every one, and is worthy of a position in our opinions which would lead them all, and which it has yet to win."

After some little discussion about the future fate of Polly Rigby and John Rodgers, Mrs. Trevor left to go and write to Helen. The news about her was not imparted to Mr. Wymerly. The latter invited Cecilia to a row upon the lake, where they spent such a morning of enjoyment as only young people know.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOUND CASTLE.

AFTER five hours spent in the railway-carriage, Lady Castleton and Marion arrived at the Blackford station, the nearest one to Mound Castle, where Mr. Stapylton, Lady Castleton's uncle, lived. There were still five miles to be driven in order to reach the house, and Lady Castleton was somewhat staggered at the price the man asked to take them there.

Meanwhile, what should she do with the luggage? If left at the station, and she succeeded in effecting her *entrée* into the establishment, there would be all the expense of sending for it; and yet, to drive up to the house with the amount of luggage she had with her, like an invited guest, would have so bad an appearance, it might just prevent the consummation taking place which she most desired.

Lady Castleton did not say what was passing in her mind to Marion, for, in proportion as the mother was a manœuverer, was the daughter straightforward—but she hesitated so much, that Marion at last said :

“Do you think we had better not go at all?”

“Oh no, my dear, not at all; how silly you are, when I have come all this way on purpose! Get in!” And turning blandly to the station-master, she said, “If you will be kind enough to take care of this luggage until I know whether my friends are at home, I shall be glad.”

“Oh, certainly, my lady,” said the man, with the utmost deference, when he heard the order to drive to Mound Castle.

During the five hours' railway journey, Lady Castleton had plenty of time for unpleasant reflections, and amongst them that Mrs. Stapylton was merely a name to her. She had never yet seen her. Mr. Stapylton's marriage had been a great disappointment to Lady Castleton, who had looked forward with a security that experience seldom has justified in inheriting his property. And, since that untoward event, both the uncle and the young wife had been put by her mentally into a condition of semi-disgrace. Now a suitable veil must be thrown over this; and during the drive to the Castle,

Lady Castleton's mind was actively engaged in preparing for a possible rebuff, which she knew was only too well deserved.

Mound Castle was not a grand place at all, neither was it a very pretty place. It was simply a substantially built house, surrounded by a wide expanse of flat meadow land, which extended as far as the Thames, and by which it was almost yearly converted into a broad lake. Why it was called Mound Castle no one knew, unless in irony, for the house stood in a complete hollow. The situation was so unhealthy, that it was only during the summer months it was safe to be there ; but as young Mrs. Stapylton hated the country in the winter, she rather approved of a summer residence where it was impossible to remain after the fall of the leaf had begun.

There was a long drive up to the house, which greatly tried Lady Castleton's nerves ; she was dreadfully out of humour with providence—and her daughter. After working so hard for it, and feeling certain of an easy berth for the rest of her days, this hopeless overthrow had upset her to a degree which she struggled hard to conceal, even from herself ; but her spirits were not nearly so elastic as they had been, and she could not hide from herself that the chances of success were very much against her. Some-

thing, however, must be done, and such foolish weakness resisted.

The man who drove the fly was equal to the occasion. A vigorous flourish of his whip brought the horse up in grand style to the Hall door, and a powerful pull of the bell sent it resounding through the house.

When the footman opened the door, in answer to such a magnificent peal, and saw only a one-horse fly standing before him, he scarcely went a step forward, but waited until Lady Castleton, with a grand air, beckoned to him to approach. This he did with supercilious reluctance, which, however, was somewhat modified by the question :

“Is my uncle at home?”

“No, ma’am, he is not.”

“Are any of the family—is Mrs. Stapylton?”

Yes, Mrs. Stapylton was within.

“Tell her—no, take in my card, I will remain here.”

The man disappeared, returning before long with a much more respectful demeanour, and said that Mrs. Stapylton was in the garden, but if her ladyship would alight, and wait in the drawing-room, he would go in search of her.

“So far good,” said Lady Castleton to herself. “There’s nothing more worth having than a

handle to your name ; it is worth several hundreds a year. I wish Marion saw these things as I do."

And she stepped out of the musty old fly, and followed the appreciating flunkey with the air of a duchess at least. The room into which she was shown was a large low-ceilinged one, heavy with old dark furniture and draperies, and though the windows, which reached down to the ground, were wide open and the day was hot, feeling damp and cold. Lady Castleton looked round with a shiver, saying to Marion, as soon as the door was closed behind them :

"My dear, what a horrid place."

"Not cheerful, certainly, mamma ; but the garden looks very bright."

"Not nearly so bright as that at Powdridge Court," said Lady Castleton, with a deep sigh.

This remark silenced Marion, and both mother and daughter remained in a very uncomfortable frame of mind, until the man returned, saying he was quite unable to find Mrs. Stapylton. He supposed she and the young ladies must have gone to a distance.

Marion looked at her mother, who was much put out, and after a brief colloquy between them, in which it was settled there was nothing to be

done but to return to the inn at the railway station, Lady Castleton turned to order the fly to come round, when the door opened, and a child about ten years old rushed in, exclaiming, "But I will see them," followed by his governess, who vainly tried to restrain him.

Another checkmate for Lady Castleton. This, then, was the son and heir who was to replace Mr. Carlyle. It was a blow, but, like a clever general, making the best of everything, Lady Castleton advanced with a grace and dignity which were part of her power, embraced the child with effusion, and said to Marion, *sotto voce*, yet quite loud enough for every one to hear :

"What a beautiful child."

Hugh Stapylton really was a beautiful child, so Marion could reply in the affirmative, while her mother went up to the lady who had followed him, and said how sorry she was to find the family all out.

"I have not seen my uncle for so long, I fear he will have forgotten me, and my aunt's acquaintance I have yet to make. I and my daughter have been so much abroad, that we have been quite separated from our relations. It has been a real misfortune, but in my circumstances inevitable ;" and here Lady Castleton

passed a handkerchief across her eyes. "But as I was near to Mound Castle, I would not pass it by without making an effort to see my mother's only brother. We must go now, Marion, dear."

"I am sure, madame," began Miss Brown, the lady addressed, "Mr. Stapylton would be extremely sorry you should do so. They are quite sure to be all in for the six o'clock tea, which they always take with the children, if you will only wait."

As it was now five, Lady Castleton, after a little show of resistance, lest she should intrude, while grieving at the thought of how much the flyman would charge for waiting, determined to remain. It was a rather desperate venture, but it might succeed.

Half an hour passed, assiduously spent in making herself agreeable to Hugh, and to Miss Brown, when there was a noise in the passage, and the latter saying, "There they are," disappeared to announce the unexpected arrivals.

Soon after there entered a slightly-made elegant woman, with pale blue eyes, and a profusion of light hair, followed by a gentleman who looked much more like her father than her husband. He stooped, and soon showed himself to be very deaf.

Taking the initiative, Lady Castleton moved hastily towards them, exclaiming, "At last, my dear uncle, we have met, and I have the pleasure of becoming acquainted with my aunt. She kissed the old gentleman as if she had been his favourite niece, and then, turning to Mrs. Stapylton with a deprecating "May I not?" did the same to her.

Mrs. Stapylton's blue eyes looked amused, but not sympathetic, while the old gentleman growled out, "You may well say at last; you've taken time enough to become acquainted with your new relation."

"Indeed, it is a long time, and a weary long time it has been to me. If you only knew what it has cost me to be thus separated from the few relations I possess."

"You seem to have borne it pretty well though, considering your looks," continued Mr. Stapylton. "Why, how ridiculously like your mother you are, face, figure, and all."

"I was always considered like her."

"And who may this be?" asked Mr. Stapylton, turning towards Marion, who had slunk on one side, not much enjoying the scene. "I do not know this young lady."

"Oh yes, you do, uncle; that's Marion, my

little Marion when you last saw her, and used to dance upon your knee."

"Upon my soul, she's grown into a mighty fine young lady; but I thought she had left you? Surely we heard, didn't we, Kate?" appealing to his wife, "that she had made a grand marriage."

At this remark Marion flushed crimson, which Mr. Stapylton perceiving, turned away and said, "Oh, I've put my foot in it, have I?"

Mrs. Stapylton here, wishing to cover Marion's confusion, asked her and Lady Castleton to take off their things. "We shall have tea directly. I hope you will remain for it."

"You are very kind, we shall be delighted to do so," and following Mrs. Stapylton out of the room, Lady Castleton added, "The truth is, I should be only too glad of an opportunity to consult my uncle, my nearest male relative. A man is such a help in business matters, and just now there is a subject upon which I really want advice."

"Then why not stay here to-night?" said Mrs. Stapylton. "Are you in a hurry to go anywhere?"

"Not particularly, we are on our way to London, that I may see my lawyer. It is very good of you to ask us to remain. I should like

it of all things, but we have nothing with us. All our luggage was left at Blackford station."

"Oh, you came that way? There is plenty of time to send for it, if you really will stay. I said only to-night, but if you will give us two or three days, we shall be all the better pleased."

This was said with much more cordiality than Mrs. Stapylton had hitherto shown; she liked Marion's looks, and thought it would be amusing to have a few more people in the house than just the family circle.

"But it is such a long way for you to send."

"Oh dear no, we think nothing of that; we are always sending over there. I will go and see about it at once."

Left to themselves Lady Castleton's face grew younger by ten years in a few minutes, and she said to Marion, with almost her old spirit:

"Now do, my dear, look bright and pleasant. It is, as I've shown you, a matter of grave importance to us to remain here, and unless you will help me, they certainly will have no wish to keep us."

"I could be cheerful enough, mamma, if only——"

"What?" said Lady Castleton impatiently.

"I might be allowed to tell my own story."

"Oh, and welcome, if you cannot trust me;

if you think you can do it so much better than I can," replied Lady Castleton, with no little pique.

"I should like to state the facts," said Marion, "if they must be known. I cannot bear Mr. Carlyle should be blamed for what is my wrong."

"My dear Marion, *les absens ont toujours tort*. It is a most convenient arrangement; it would be the height of absurdity not to accept it. You see it is thought so true, it has passed into a proverb, and it is folly to be wiser than proverbs."

"I never pretend to be wise, but I do like to be honest."

"And do you suppose I don't?"

The door now opening, Mrs. Stapylton reappeared.

"It is all right. I've arranged it all. When you are ready, we will have tea."

"Thanks, so much," said Lady Castleton; "we are quite ready," and she went towards the door, desirous of not being left alone any longer with Marion.

As they went downstairs, Mrs. Stapylton said:

"Now that you are not going to-morrow, do not say anything about business to-night to my husband. I always avoid it for him in the evening."

"I shall be only too glad to follow your

directions. It will be a relief to me, too. I am unusually tired myself to-night."

In spite of this, however, Lady Castleton exerted herself the whole evening to amuse her uncle, and with so much success that, after they had parted for the night, he remarked with evident pleasure to his wife :

"A very pleasant woman, very pleasant woman ; just like her mother. Dear me, to think how the young ones push us off the tree, and yet are so like us. Why, Kate, I could have thought sometimes I was talking to my own sister."

It was fortunate, both for Marion and her mother, that they were allotted separate bedrooms. Their effect upon one another just now was reciprocally irritating, and without such a division there would have been little sleep for either of them that night. As it was, Lady Castleton did not close her eyes until late into the small hours of the night. Her brain was over-excited, it would not rest, and hour after hour struck, while she was pondering the past and contriving the future. At last, however, she fell into a heavy sleep which brought little refreshment with it ; so little that it was a relief to rise the next morning and throw off the heaviness which oppressed her.

Marion, in spite of herself, had passed a pleasant evening with Mrs. Stapylton and her young cousins. No sooner was she in bed than she fell sound asleep, and awoke the next day with a gladsome feeling and sense of escape from a hideous future, to which she had long been a stranger. This feeling of relief made her comparatively indifferent about the present, and able to exercise more patience towards the inaccuracies of her mother's statements than she could have believed possible. It also made her ready to please and be pleased with her new relations, without feeling it incumbent upon her to be for ever on the watch that she might not seem to corroborate the fictions Lady Castleton was so clever in weaving into her recitals.

Directly after breakfast, Hugh seized upon Marion and carried her off to see his guinea-pigs, rabbits, and dormice. He was a very nice boy, and no companionship could have been as acceptable to her just now as his.

The girls retreated with their governess to the schoolroom.

Mrs. Stapylton, who did her own house-keeping, was actively engaged in its duties; so Lady Castleton was left alone with her uncle, which was just what she desired.

After a few indifferent observations, she asked

after a certain portrait of her mother which she believed he possessed. Now this portrait was in the library, whither Mr. Stapylton took her. It would have been a charming room, but for the dank, musty smell which hung about it, as about all the rooms on the ground floor ; but it was worst of all in this one.

The effect upon Lady Castleton was sickening, but she was too well pleased at having the old gentleman to herself to make any objections about remaining in this room.

After duly looking at and admiring the picture, to which she bore a striking resemblance, Lady Castleton said :

“ And now, my dear uncle, if you can spare me half-an-hour, it would be a great relief to me to take your advice upon my present position, which is full of difficulties.”

“ Eh ? eh ?—What, my dear !—difficulties !—money difficulties, of course ?” And Mr. Stapylton buttoned tight the pocket of his pantaloons. “ I’ve got a family, my dear ; so there’s nothing to be had there.”

Lady Castleton put on her blandest smile :

“ There *are* other difficulties besides those in life, dear uncle.”

“ Eh ? Well, perhaps so. What have you got to say ?”

"You noticed how Marion blushed yesterday, when you alluded to her marriage?"

"Yes," said Mr. Stapylton, with a look of interest.

"It is about that I want to consult you."

"I never yet knew any good come of consulting about marriages. They either take place—or they don't. Then there really was something in the wind?"

"Not only in the wind, but everything was settled—everything, nearly, except the day when it was actually to take place, which makes it so terribly mortifying for the poor child."

"Eh?—what the man backed out?"

"It was broken off," replied Lady Castleton, in terror lest Marion might, at some future time, contradict her statements; "and, I must think, in a very unhandsome way."

"How?—why?"

"You know, girls will have their fancies. No mother can possibly prevent it—though, I am sure, I have been most careful about Marion. It happened that Mr. Carlyle heard of some previous—I suppose I must call them flirtations—but really, it was nothing more than what passes between young people in society to which they are perfectly indifferent. How he heard of it I do not know, and have no wish to inquire.

I should not like to accuse any one ; but there may have been more than one person in the family who would have liked to keep him single."

"Ah, indeed!" said Mr. Stapylton, with a twinkle of his eye.

"So my poor child became the victim?"

"Well?"

"Can nothing be done?"

"Done!" roared out the old gentleman. "You are not dreaming of dragging Marion into a court?"

Lady Castleton's busy brain had even thought of this; she had only five shillings left in her pocket, and she would not have at all objected to Marion's being punished for the reckless way in which she had thrown away all her advantages. But her uncle's tone told her it would not do; so she replied at once:

"Oh dear, no!—of course, not that; but I thought that if some member of the family—of your standing, you know—were to write to Mr. Carlyle, and to represent to him the great injury it was to the young lady to be so overthrown, that something might be done."

"You reckoned without your host, there, as far as I am concerned, niece. I would not play godfather to the conduct of any of the young

people of the present day—no, not even were they my own daughters. Miss Marion is a very pretty girl; I've no doubt the young fellows think so; and I should not be at all surprised if Mr. Carlyle was quite justified in all he has thought."

"Oh! uncle; how can you say such a cruel thing to me?"

And Lady Castleton pulled out her pocket-handkerchief—this time to wipe away real tears of mortification and anxiety at her ill-success.

"Well, well," said Mr. Staplyton, somewhat mollified by the sight of them, "it may be vexing to you, but young people are vexing. I'm sure what I shall do with Hugh, when he grows up, is more than I know. But perhaps I shall be gone then, and his mother will have to settle that, so I may get off easy."

"But, uncle, do you really think I can do nothing?"

"I do not see what you can do; for I must tell you, were I quite convinced that your daughter was entirely in the right, and her quondam lover altogether wrong, I should feel it quite beneath me to try to get money out of him."

"He has got plenty out of me, uncle."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you know, I've little beyond my annuity to live on, and that requires the most careful management to make it last. Hitherto, I will say that for myself, I have pulled through, but, as we were staying at Mr. Carlyle's house, and thus I had no expenses of a house of my own, and looked forward to the future with certainty, I was imprudent; I see it now, but I did not know there was any snake in the grass, how could I? so I spent my money more freely than the event has proved was wise, but how could I tell that?"

"Ah, my dear, we should be prepared for all turns."

"It was the most natural thing to do. I was obliged myself to be always well dressed; then, how could I let Marion marry without a suitable *trousseau*, so my money ran out at both ends of my purse, and surely some representation of this might be made to Mr. Carlyle without compromising my dignity."

"It can't be done—at least, I won't have a hand in it."

"I'm sure I do not know what to do then."

"I'm very sorry for you, but I do not see how I can help you." Saying this, Mr. Staplyton rose, and, looking at his watch, added, "I must be off," quitted the room, leaving his niece in a

state of greater despondency than he had the least idea of. Never yet in his life had he been without at least five pounds in his pocket, and the certainty of being able to replace them when spent.

END OF VOL. II.



